# MUNDHUM AESTHETICS

## The Poetic and Philosophical Vision of Kirat Culture

Dr. Nawa Raj Subba

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Publisher
Hamro Idea
Biratnagar, Nepal
2026

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First Edition: 2026

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Cover design: Dr. Nawa Raj Subba in collaboration with Gemini

Published by
Hamro Idea
Biratnagar, Nepal

ISBN (eBook): 9789937-9958-8-7
ISBN (Print): 9789937-9958-9-4
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18984317

The views expressed in this book are those of the author.
This book is published as an Open Access publication.

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# Preface

The Kirat civilisation and philosophy of life are primordial and are known as the Mundhum. In its ritualistic discourses, there is a limitless aesthetic world of human sensibility, love of nature and cosmic consciousness. A work written with the determination of restoring the original aesthetic vision, which has been obscured over a long time, is thus a novel and significant point of departure in the Kirat literature field. In my opinion, the work is not just a book but a strong background to the study of the subject in this field, which is Mundhumi Saundaryabodh (Mundhum Aesthetics).

When we refer to the word 'aesthetics', what are in our minds are the superficial appearance and beauty. But, in Mundhum philosophy, the term 'aesthetics' is used to indicate the deep unity between nature and human beings. In the Kirat mind, in which stones, rivers, and plants are venerated as gods, there is an aesthetic and poetic richness requiring interpretation according to the pale aesthetics of the modern-day scholastic viewpoint. We have long approached aesthetics only from the perspective of Western or Classical Sanskrit poetics; this book is an attempt to create our own native metaphors, symbols, and original rhythms.

Life in the Kirat philosophy is, in itself, an epic. The beauty concealed in the rhythmic footsteps of the Sakela dance, the Dhol-Jhyamta (drums and cymbals) resonance, and the deep dialogue with nature is brought out in this book as a form of poetic consciousness. It raises Mundhum out of the stifling straitjackets of a religious book, holding it rather as a living and moving artistic discourse.

To sum up, I hope this book will be a solid beginning of

the rediscovery of Kirat aesthetics. It will be crucial in passing the transcendental knowledge, which is maintained by our ancestors, to the contemporary generation as well as in defining Mundhum aesthetics as a legitimate subject of study in the international academic arena.

# Acknowledgements

This book is my way of honouring our ancestors and the shamans, the first keepers of the Mundhum. They carried this wisdom for generations, passing it down through stories and sheer spiritual grit. The way they turned cosmic truths into poetry, honestly, that's what gives these pages their soul. I am deeply grateful to those unseen elders who kept our traditions and sense of beauty alive, century after century.

# Section A: Theoretical Background

## Chapter 1: What Is Aesthetics? An introductory analysis

### Introduction

'Aesthetics' refers to the branch of philosophy which is concerned with the philosophical determination of what beauty, art and taste are. It is a science which aims at studying art. It tries to comprehend our emotions, feelings, and our intellectual and emotional reactions to anything or work. In simple words, aesthetics is profound thinking and examination of what is "beauty" and what is art and how we come to experience something beautiful or art.

Aesthetics is defined as the appreciation of art, and art history has evolved throughout history.

'Aesthetics' is a Greek word derived from 'aisthesis', meaning 'sensation' or 'feeling' (Tatarkiewicz, 1980). The term was first applied in the eighteenth century, and it was defined as an independent form of knowledge by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten in his philosophical work. He established it as a principle of sensuous knowledge.

But this genre received a systematic form by the renowned philosopher Immanuel Kant in his well-known book "Critique of Judgement" (1790) (Kant, 1790/2000). Not the object was considered by Kant to be the beautiful object, but rather a subjective

relationship that exists within the mind of the viewer (subject). To him, referring to something as beautiful is associated with the emotion of happiness felt in our mind, which is disinterested.

## Consideration of the Key Questions in Aesthetics.

The following are the primary questions that are addressed by aesthetics:

What is art? What is the demarcation of art and non-art? Are all things created by human beings' art?

What is beauty? Is it beauty in itself which is the benefactor? (Objective vs Subjective)

The manner in which aesthetic judgement is performed? Why do we say that some pictures are good and some are bad? Why should these decisions be made?

What is the value of art? What is the social, moral and cultural meaning of art?

How is the creation done? What goes on in the minds of artists? Is the primary source of art talent mimesis or expression?

## Aesthetics in a Contemporary Context

The arena of aesthetics has been expanded in this contemporary era. It was traditionally restricted to painting, sculpture, literature and music. However, it has now expanded to include film, photography, advertising, fashion, industrial design, building construction and digital media (Chicago School of Media Theory, 2003).

On the one hand, postmodernism has criticised the conventional perception of art and beauty, and, on the other hand, so-called analytical aesthetics has given more emphasis to the analysis of the language and logic of art. Associated with semiotics, semiotic aesthetics focuses on the way works of art produce meaning and the way the latter are perceived by a reader/viewer (Zhao, 2022). This has been reinforced by the fact that philosophers like Hegel viewed art as an expression of meaning

that is symbolic (Halliwell, 2015).

## Postmodernism

Postmodernism questions the classical beliefs about art and beauty. The following are some of its statements:

(a) There is no prescribed boundary of what is and what is not art.

Quote: To postmodernists, no single boundary can be used to define art. Anything can be called art.

Examples:

The traditional way of describing painting was to consider that it was made of colour on a canvas. However, in 1917, a urinal was displayed by the postmodern artist Marcel Duchamp at the Art Museum, and he called it the Fountain. "It's also art," he said. It questioned the classic concept of art.

(b). There is no one definition of what is meant by beauty.

Quote: Postmodernists declare that beauty is not an objective thing. Beauty may not be the same thing to both. Thus, beauty does not have a universal standard.

Examples:

Some societies regard white skin as beautiful, whereas others regard black skin as beautiful. In certain areas, obesity is a sign of beauty, whereas in others, thinness is a sign of beauty. According to postmodernists, all these beliefs are constructed in relation to society and culture; they are not absolute truths.

(c) The meaning of art is made by the viewer himself

Quote: The postmodernists argue that art does not have a specific meaning. The viewer might perceive the same thing differently based on their experience and perception, though the artist may have a different idea.

Examples:

When you see the red colour in an image, there are those

who feel love, others feel angry, and others think about blood. According to the postmodernists, these are all right. The art does not have one true meaning.

## Analytical aesthetics

Analytical aesthetics is the logical analysis of ideas of art. Here are the key statements:

(a) The meaning of the word 'art' must be evident.

'What are we saying by art?' analytical aesthetics say. What does this word mean? To begin with, it must have a clear meaning of the word, and only then can we argue about what art is.

Examples:

We tend to say, 'That is a piece of art.' But what is "art"? Does this mean "beautiful"? Or is it the thought of arousing feelings? Or is it "skilfully made"? Analytical aestheticians say, 'You see, we should get these words clear first.'

(b) Art decisions should be rational.

Saying: When we explain the work of art as good or bad, we should have logic behind it. Simply stating that you liked it or that you did not like it does not constitute an art review.

Examples:

Suppose a person were to see a picture and say there is a good picture. The aesthetician as an analyst will say, 'Why is it good? What has made it better? Use of colour? Drawings? Feeling? "When it comes to appreciating the works of art, they say that we ought to be able to provide reasons and arguments.

(c) There should be a difference between art and non-art.

Saying: 'What is the distinction between art and non-art?' Say analytical aestheticians. What can make a difference between a common stone and a sculpture? These distinctions ought to be distinctly defined.

Examples:

A plain street stone and a sculpture of Michelangelo's David. Both are made of stone. But one is art; the other is not. Why? The question of the quality of sculpting stone is the answer that analytical aestheticians seek. The artist's skill? The Emotion of an Image? Its historical importance?

Primary disparities between the two streams.

## Analytic Aesthetics of Postmodernism.

Insists on the clear definition of art, which states that there is no clear definition of art.

Everybody claims that they are right and that they are addressing the matter of logic and evidence.

The viewer creates the meaning of art and analyses the meaning of art.

It is believed that anything that happens – that is, it has to be clear and orderly.

Now we may know by the example of everyday life,

Example: A drawing of a child on a piece of paper of a fist.

The postmodernist opinion: this too is art. Since art is expression, this child has given expression to his feelings. It all depends on the perception of the viewer whether or not to call it art.

The Perspective of the Analytical Aesthetic: What Does the Word 'Art' Mean? Suppose art is a skilful composition; it cannot be art because it is unskilled. But when art is taken to mean the expression of feeling, then it may be called art. To begin with, we must understand what we mean by art.

These two schools have a different view of aesthetics. Postmodernism is open and diverse, whereas analytic aesthetics is clear and rational.

## Western Aesthetic Thinking: From Plato to Hegel

Western philosophy defines aesthetics in the triangularity of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Plato and the theory of imitations: According to Plato, art is an imitation of imitation. He held the view that only ideologies or ideas were true things and termed the physical world a shadow of the idea. In his view, since the artist imitates this material world (shadow), art is doubly separated from reality (Plato, 380 BCE/2000). To illustrate, a carpenter has an idea in his mind before he makes a chair, and this is the first truth. The second shape (shadow) of the idea is the wooden chair crafted by the carpenter, and the third shape is the painting crafted by the artist looking at the same chair and is termed as the shadow of the shadow. It is based on this that he analyses beauty based on moral and social utility.

Aristotle and purgatory: Aristotle has redefined art by updating the theory of imitation of his master, Plato. Now art, in his view, is not a precise copy of something but a creative representation of a should or a possible fact in life. The artist not only presents the world in its true or real sense, but he also makes it more polished and significant. Aristotle proposed the idea of catharsis, or purgatory, in which the concepts of art and tragedy cleanse the feelings of man (Aristotle, 335 BCE/1996). As an example, when you are watching a tragic movie or a drama, you get a feeling of compassion and dread, and then the release of these feelings through tears helps in lightening and cleansing our hearts.

Immanuel Kant and Aesthetic Perception: Immanuel Kant has associated beauty with the perception of man as opposed to the quality of the object. Based on his definition of disinterested satisfaction, we only experience the beauty of things when we do not realise that we are being selfish, greedy or aiming for a certain end; the only thing we have is the experience of an actual beauty (Kant, 1790/1987). The same example can be given: when we look at a rose, it would be selfish to say, 'I will pluck

it, sell it, or decorate it,' but it will be true aesthetics to say, 'How beautiful it is when we see its colour and touch.' Coupled with this, he has also been able to explain the distinction between the common beautiful and sublime that is created by the immense and overwhelming natural scene.

Hegel and the Philosophy of Fine Arts: Aesthetics According to Hegel, aesthetics was the philosophy of the fine arts and regarded art as the expression of human thought. Beauty to him is the final or sensory expression of thought (Hegel, 1835/1975). That is, where the abstract thoughts in our heads are given a form in art, we have created beauty. He subdivided art into three periods. The initial symbolic phase, in which the form is bigger and more indefinable than the concept (e.g., the pyramids of Egypt). The second classical phase in which the equilibrium of thought and physical form is attained (e.g., Greek sculptures). and the third libertarian phase, where the human emotion and spirit have a bigger part than the physical form (e.g., poetry or music).

## Indian Rasa Theory: Bharatamuni and Abhinavagupta

Indian Rasa Theory: In the aesthetics of the inner taste of art, 'rasa' is considered to be the heart of art. Just as the taste of food pleases the tongue, so the mental pleasure derived from art (drama, poetry or film) is rasa. Bharata Muni and the Process of Rasa: Bharata Muni has presented a sutra in his famous treatise, Natyashastra:

विभावानुभावव्यभिचारिसंयोगाद्रसनिष्पत्तिः

(Bharata Muni, 2nd century BCE/2003).

Its simple meaning is that when the combination of vibhava (cause or environment), anubhava (physical reaction) and adulterous bhava (mental state) is combined, the permanent emotion within a person turns into rasa. For example, in a film, when the love (vibhava) between the hero and the heroine, their blushing or looking style (anubhava) and the joy or restlessness

(adulterous emotion) in them meet, the 'rati' (permanent emotion of love) in the mind of the audience is awakened, and the 'romantic rasa' is experienced. He initially explained the 8 rasas.

| S.No. | Rasa's Name | The emotion it represents | Example/State |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sringar Rasa | Love | Attraction or love between the hero and heroine. |
| 2 | Hasya Rasa | Laughter | The laughter that comes from a joke, a distortion, or an awkward behaviour. |
| 3 | Karuna Rasa | Grief or pity | The pain caused by the loss of a loved one or a tragic event. |
| 4 | Raudra Rasa | Anger | Anger that arises in the heart when insulted or wronged. |
| 5 | Bir Rasa | Courage | The courage and excitement that come from war, charity, or hard work. |
| 6 | Bhayanak Rasa | Fear | The fear of seeing a frightening sight or a predatory creature, such as a tiger. |
| 7 | Bibhatsa Rasa | Hatred (disgust) | Nausea or disgust at a foul smell or a bad sight. |
| 8 | Adbhut Rasa | Surprise | The wonder of seeing something magical or something never seen before. |

## Abhinavagupta and the philosophy of expression

Abhinavagupta further advanced the Rasa theory philosophically and psychologically. He made it clear through the theory of 'Expressionism' that rasa is not something that comes from outside, but rather it is dormant or a seed within the mind of us (Abhinavagupta, 10th century/2006). Art only serves to awaken it. He considers the experience of beauty to be as pure as 'Brahmananda Sahodar', i.e., the supreme bliss that comes from meditation or samadhi. He established the 'Shanta Rasa' as the 9th Rasa, which brings a person to the pinnacle of mental peace.

## Indigenous Aesthetics: The Art of Life and Existence

Indigenous aesthetics are fundamentally different from traditional European or classical thinking. It sees art as not just an object of 'exhibition' in museums or galleries but also links it to people's daily 'lifestyle' and 'existence'. In this view, art and life are not two separate things; rather, how many lives he has and how he relates to nature is his art. For example, the paintings that an indigenous community paints on the walls of their homes or supernatural figures in their courtyards are not just decorations; they are an integral part of their faith and way of life.

Another key feature of this aesthetic is the collectivity and the close relationship with nature. In Indigenous aesthetics, art is not the private property or 'creation' of any one person but a collective. It reflects the inseparable relationship between nature and man. For example, in the Asare song or group folk dance sung during the planting of paddy, not just one singer or dancer, but the entire community celebrates their relationship with nature (soil and water). Here, nature is both the main source and the basis of art.

The concept of 'functional beauty' is very strong in tribal

art. This means that beauty here is not only to attract the eye but also for its utility. For example, baskets or traditional hand-woven garments made of bamboo have very fine arts and motifs, but these items are made for a specific purpose and not just decoration (Devya, 2002). In this way, art and work (purpose) go hand in hand in tribal aesthetics; the more useful it is, the more beautiful it is.

Finally, oral tradition, folklore, and ancestral memory play a greater role in this aesthetics than written scriptures or texts. For communities with no written history, their songs, stories, and proverbs are the standard of beauty. Aboriginal aesthetics also express the identity of marginalised communities and the 'resistance' they face for their land and rights. For example, a folktale makes the community aware of its identity by explaining the boundaries and importance of its ancestral land.

## Conclusion

This chapter will be specific to the analysis of the theoretical foundations of aesthetics, its history, and the manner in which it is perceived by different schools of thought across the world. In this chapter, it is also evident that aesthetics is not merely the examination of the superficial beauty of an object but is a highly philosophical approach to human consciousness, cognition and the world.

Having argued that art is an imitation quite the opposite of the truth, Plato appears eventually in the Western philosophical tradition as having claimed that it is purgation and seeking possible truth by the time it finds Aristotle. During the modern period, Immanuel Kant identified beauty as the unselfish contentment associated with human thought, and Hegel identified art as the historical expression of thought. All these perspectives have brought the Western aesthetic thought to the subjective experience as opposed to the objective truth.

Conversely, in the context of Oriental aesthetics, Rasa Siddhanta by Bharatamuni and Abhinavagupta puts in place the fact

that the primary goal of art is the experience of pleasure. It is very original that the Oriental belief of art awakening the inner feelings in a person and bringing happiness, like the Brahmananda. In addition, the chapter addresses the issue of Indigenous aesthetics and defines art as a means of lifestyle, collectivism, and survival by removing it from the performance sphere.

To sum up, aesthetics is an interactive and open field. It covers all the classical rules of the verbal heritage of the native people and strives to make human life worth living. The core of aesthetics is the usefulness of the object, calmness of the mind and social identity. Aesthetics has been given a strong base in this chapter, and it will be used in analysing the different forms of art that will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

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# Chapter 2: Kirat Worldview and Mundhum Philosophy

The Mundhum, which is the cultural core of the Kirat community, is not just a religious text; it is a broad worldview and profound philosophy looking at life and the world (Chemjong, 2060; Subba, 2075). It is also often referred to as the "Kirat Veda", which encapsulates the primitive knowledge, history, rituals and social code of this community (Imsong, 2010). The Mundhum is based on an oral tradition, which has been memorised and recited rhythmically for generations by priests such as Phedangma, Nchung, and Madba (Kerung, 2074). In this chapter, we will provide an in-depth analysis of the three basic pillars of the Kirat worldview: Tongsam Tongshim (Creation and Balance), Yuma/ Sammang (Mother Earth) and Tagera Ningwafuma, and the triangular relationship between nature, ancestor and man.

## 2.1 Tongsam Tongshim (Creation and Balance)

The most fundamental concept of Mundhum philosophy is Tongsam Tongshim. In the Limbu language, "Tongsam" means "creation", while "Tongshim" means "balance" or "harmony" (Limbu, 2072). This concept is the foundation of the origin of the universe and its continued operation. The Mundhum contains interesting myths about how the universe was created, which suggests that the universe was created by the interaction of various elements of nature (Chemjong, 2060).

Example 1: Mundhumi Explanation of Creation

According to the Mundhum, the universe began from nothing. In the beginning, there was nothing – neither heaven, nor earth, nor light, nor darkness. Then Tagera Ningwafuma (the Creator) created an egg by his own will. The egg split into two parts – the upper part became the sky, and the lower part became the earth (Menyangbo, 2015). Mountains, mountains, and rivers were formed from the white part inside the egg, while humans, animals and plants originated from the yellow part (Limbu, 2072). This story shows that all the elements of nature originated from the same source and that there was an intrinsic relationship between them.

Tongsam Tongshim refers not only to the physical creation but also to the moral and spiritual balance needed in human life (Subba, 2075). Based on this philosophy, the whole universe is dependent on the balance of opposite yet complementary forces (e.g., Purusha and Prakriti, day and night, happiness and unhappiness). In the event of the imbalance, natural disasters, diseases, or social deviations occur (Hongkhim, 2018). This balance is thus attempted to be kept through arranging different festivals, pujas and rites in the Kirat way of life.

Example 2: Concept of Balance – Udhauli and Ubhauli Festival

The most appropriate examples to explain the balancing aspect of Tongsim Tongshim are the Udhauli and Ubhaoli festivals. Kirati celebrate these two festivals twice in a year (Chamling, 2076):

Ubhaali (Baisakh Purnima): It is during this period that the sun turns into the north and winter finishes, and summer starts. The planting season begins. This time, the Kiratis pray to nature, hoping that they will have good harvests and rains (Imsong, 2010). In projection, there is the Rai community that observes the Sakela festival at Ubhaali, where the Bhumche (the village guardian god) is worshipped and danced (Chamling, 2076).

Udhauli (November Purnima): It is the period of the

movement of the sun towards the south. During this festival, Kiratis praise nature because it has provided them with good crops (Kerung, 2074). The Limbu people have a celebratory festival called the Chasok Tangnam that is celebrated in Udhauli, in which new grains and fruits are paid to the ancestors and nature (Tumbapo, 2077).

These two festivals represent the equal relationship with nature – we borrow something and return it to nature. It is a ratio of giving and receiving called Tongsim (Hongkhim, 2018).

## 2.2 Yuma/Sammang (Mother Earth) and Tagera Ningwafuma.

The Kirat religion has the supreme deity, who is called Yuma or Sammang (Mother Earth). Yuma Sammang is believed to be the personification of the earth, which is everything where living things can be found (Phedap, 2019). She is considered to be a loving mother who takes care of her kids. His adulation is sung during Mundhum, and other rituals are also done to appease him (Menyangbo, 2015). The Kiratis discern in the presence of Yuma Sammang all the forms of nature, of rocks, stones, roots, and streams.

Observation 3: Yuma Sammang Puja Ceremony.

The Limbu community has a special worship of Yuma Sammang. The following are regarded as important in this puja (Tumbapo, 2077):

Takma (Ginger): Ginger is regarded as the representation of purity and well-being. The insertion of ginger into the puja is an indication of praying to the goddess to have a healthy life.

Feja (Egg): The egg is regarded as a symbol of creation. It hopes that it is a new life and fertility.

Sakma (rice flour): Rice flour refers to prosperity and purity.

Thokpa (Marsi rice): the Marsi rice (red rice) is believed to be the favourite of the gods (Phedap, 2019).

During the puja, the Phedangma (priest) addresses Yuma Sammang while reciting the Mundhum:

"O Yuma Sammang, you are the mother of the earth. You have given us land to live on, food to eat, and water to drink. We are your children. Protect us, protect us from disease; let our crops be good, may our livestock be healthy (Limbu Mundhum, cited in FEDAP, 2019, p. 10).

Another important concept is associated with Yuma Sammang, Tagera Ningwafuma. In Tagera Ningwafu, the creator is the male deity, who is considered to be the primordial source of the universe (Limbu, 2072). He is regarded as the "Primordial Man" and the "father of all". According to the Mundhum, Tagera lives in the sky in Ningwafu and governs the entire universe (Kerung, 2074).

Example 4: The Concept of Tagera Ningwafuma

According to a Mundhumi story, Tagera Ningwafuma created the first human beings – Khichan and Vichan – from his tears. These two brothers are the ancestors of all the Kiratis. Khechan cultivated rice and maize, while Bichan hunted. Thus, they began human civilisation (Subba, 2075).

Some scholars also describe Tagera Ningwafuma and Yuma Sammang as two sides of the same entity (Purusha and Prakriti). These two gods together form the basis of all creation, and it is by their grace that the world is governed (Chemjong, 2060).

## 2.3 Triangular relationship between nature, ancestors and man

One of the most interesting aspects of the Kirat worldview is the triangular relationship between nature, ancestors and man. This relationship is based on mutual dependence and respect (Hongkhim, 2018; Imsong, 2010). The Mundhum sees man not only as a part of nature but also as a protector and heir of nature. This tradition of "considering nature as God" has been in place since the beginning of creation (Menyangbo, 2015). Nature

is considered to be superior to man, which provides life and sustenance to humans. Therefore, it is the religious duty of every Kirati to protect and respect nature.

Example 5: Pitru Puja (Animism)

According to the Kiratis, after death, the ancestors are transformed into direct deities. This concept is called animism. In the Mundhum, it is believed that the souls of the ancestors become sammang (deity) (Phedap, 2019). Due to this belief, Pitru Puja is performed at different times, where food is offered to them in their memory, and their blessings are taken (Chamling, 2076).

The Sakala festival is a classic example of this. Ancestors are worshipped during this festival, celebrated by the Rai community. Main activities to be carried out at Sakela (Chamling, 2076):

| Activity | Objectives | Related Aspects |
|---|---|---|
| Nwagi (New Grain Offering) | Offering the First Harvest to Ancestors | Man-ancestor-nature |
| Chulho Puja | The main stove of the house is considered sacred and worshipped. | Belief that ancestral spirits reside in the home |
| Bhumche Puja | Worship of the guardian deity of the village | Nature (Land) and Man |
| Mundhum recitation | Telling the History of the Ancestors | Oral History Preservation |

Here is a Mundhumi song sung during the Sakela:

*"Today we remember our ancestors,*
*Who gave us this land?*
*Who taught us how to cultivate,*
*Who gave us this culture?*
*Ancestors dwell in the sky.*
*But it's always on our minds.*
*This land you have given,*
*We will protect our children.*

(Rai Mundhum, quoted in Chamling, 2076, p. 10).

Example 6: Sacred Forest (Thread/Bayung)

The Kirat community consists of sacred forests called 'thread' (limbu) or 'byung' (Rai). Cutting down these forests, destroying trees and plants, or hunting here is prohibited (Menyangbo, 2015; Tumbapo, 2077).

These forests are the intersection of all three aspects – nature, ancestor and man – (Hangkhim, 2018):

- As Nature: These forests are a repository of biodiversity, home to rare flora and fauna.

- As an ancestor: These forests are believed to be inhabited by the spirits of the ancestors. Here, ancestors are worshipped.

- As a human being: Humans should protect these forests. If anyone destroys these forests, society punishes them.

For example, the Topla Chimling yarn in Yangnam VDC of Panchthar district is a sacred forest of the Limbu community. The trees here are hundreds of years old, and it is forbidden to cut any trees here (Tumbapo, 2077).

Example 7: Triangular relationship during festivals

The Chasok Tangnam and Nwagi festivals illustrate this triangular relationship. In these festivals (FEDAP, 2019; Kerung, 2074):

1. Connection with nature: The new crop is brought to a great extent. Nature is thanked.

2. Relationship with ancestors: New grains are offered to the ancestors. Their blessings are sought.

3. Relationship with people: The whole village feasts and dances together. Social cohesion is strengthened (Imsong, 2010).

At this festival, Phedangma recites the Mundhum and says:

*"Mother Nature, this grain you have given me,*
*Father, you have taught me this field,*
*We, the children, are eating this grain today.*
*May this grain nourish our bodies,*
*May this ritual nourish our souls.*

May your blessings always be with us. (Limbu Mundhum, cited Fedap, 2019, p. 10).

Man is thus a bridge between these two forces—nature (which gives material existence) and ancestors (which give cultural and spiritual identity). It is the duty of human beings to conserve nature and to continue the traditions inherited from our ancestors (Subba, 2075). This triangular relationship is the basis of the social structure, justice system and economic life of Kirat society, which is regulated and guided by the Mundhum.

## Conclusion

The Mundhum philosophy founded the relationship between creation, ancestors, and man based on the notion of Mother Earth (Yuma/Sammang) and Creator (Tagera Ningwafuma) on the theoretical foundation of creation and balance (Tongsam Tongshim) (Chemjong, 2060; Limbu, 2072). These three components are so interconnected that when one is eliminated, the other one will be put in jeopardy (Hangkhim, 2018).

The relevance of this philosophy has also become even higher in modern times of environmental crisis and social disintegration. This prehistoric knowledge of the Kirats teaches us that a sustainable society may be constructed in the form of a proper interaction with nature and the respect for ancestors

(Menyangbo, 2015; Fedaup, 2019). Mundhum is not a document of the past only, but it is also a document of the future.

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# Chapter 3: Linguistic and Rhythmic Structure of Mundhum

The Mundhum of the Kirat community is a classic example of oral tradition. It not only contains religious and cultural knowledge but is also extremely rich in linguistic and rhythmic aspects. The Mundhum is known as the "Kirat Veda", whose linguistic structure, rhythm and rhyme bear a great deal of similarity to the Vedic tradition (Rai, 2072; Imsong, 2010). Just as there are Vedangas such as Chandshastra, Shiksha, and Nirukta for the study of the Vedas, similarly, a deep analysis of its linguistic and rhythmic structure is necessary for the study of the Mundhum (Rai, 2024). In this chapter, we will analyse three main aspects of the linguistic and rhythmic structure of the Mundhum: oral tradition and rhyme, the rhythm and sound-beauty of the Palam (Phangyang), and repetition, symbol and image in mantras and myths.

## 3.1 Oral tradition and poetry

The most important feature of Mundhum is its oral tradition. Mundhum has been passed down by rote in a guru-shishya tradition for thousands of years before the invention of writing (Subba, 2075). In this tradition, priests like Phedangma, Nachhung, and Madba recite the verses of Mundhum in a rhythmic style, which helps in easy memorisation and preservation of the verses for generations (Kerung, 2074).

Example 1: Similarity with Vedic tradition

This oral tradition of Mundhum is very similar to the Vedic tradition. Vedic literature is also called 'Shruti', because it was based on the tradition of listening and reciting (Rai, 2024). In the Limbu language, the word "Mundhum" means "Mun" (to move) and "Dhum" (strong), i.e., knowledge that is powerful saying or oral script. Thus, both traditions are based on hearing and pronunciation (Limbu, 2072).

Just as Vedic verses are composed in a fixed metre, so too are the verses of Mundhum based on a fixed rhythm and metre. Chandshastra refers to the lyrical arrangement of varna and matra (Bharatiya Chandshastra, BS 2080). According to Indian tradition, there are two types of chant: Vedic chant (used in the Vedas) and secular chant (used in general literature). The chant of Mundhum can also be seen in connection with this tradition.

Example 2: The rhyme structure of Mundhum

The rhymes used in Mundhum are mainly metrical rhymes, where the number of measures is given more importance than the number of syllables. For example, consider the phrase "Tongsing Tongsing Yuma Sammang" from Limbu Mundhum:

*Tong-sing Tong-saam You-ma Sam-mang*
(2 doses) (2 doses) (2 doses) (2 doses)

This verse has four sections, each section having two verses. Thus, this verse of 8 verses is sung to a specific rhythm (Fedap, 2019).

## 3.2 The rhythm and sound beauty of the Palam (Fangyang)

There are various types of mundhums found in the Kirat community, of which the Palam or Phangyang (song/song) is the most prominent. Palams are those mundhums that are sung with a special rhythm and sound beauty. These include heroic tales, love tales, historical tales, etc. (Chamling, 2076).

Example 3: Rhythmic structure of a poem

To understand the rhythm of the palam, one can take the example of the famous palam called "Sakela Sirijanga". This palam, sung during the Sakela festival of the Rai community, is sung as follows:

*sa-ke-la si-ri-j-nga*
*(l-l-g) (l-l-g-l)*
*Ha-ng-ha-ng ha-ng ch-ri-la*
*(L-L-L-L) (L-L-L-L)*

This palam has a unique combination of "L" (short vowel) and "G" (long vowel). In the first line, "Sakela" uses two short and one guru (L-L-G) and "Sirijanga" uses three short and one guru (L-L-L-G). This gives the song a special rhythm and dynamics (Chamling, 2076, p. 124).

Example 4: Use of sound-aesthetics

Various devices are used in Mundhum for phonetic beauty, such as alliteration, rhyme, etc. Let's look at a passage from Limbu Mundhum:

*"Hang hang hang hang hang hang hang"*
*Yang Yang Yang Yang Yang Yang Yang Yola*
*Fung fung fung fung fung fung fula*
*"Sung Sung Sung Sung Sung Sung Sola"*

Here, the repetition of "hang", "yang", "fung", "sung" creates a unique sound-beauty. "Hang" means king, "yang" means wealth, "fung" means flower, and "sung" means message. The repetition of these words conveys a sense of prosperity, beauty, and power (Tumbapo, 2077, p. 89).

## 3.3 Repetition, symbols and imagery in mantras and myths

Another important feature of Mundhum is the use of repetition, symbols, and imagery. These three elements not only make Mundhum beautiful but also make its meaning deep and effective (Hangkhim, 2018).

Example 5: Using repetition

Repetition is widely used in the mantras of Mundhum. This not only makes them easy to memorise but also creates a kind of trance-like effect. Let's look at a famous Mundhum mantra:

*"Oh Yuma, oh Yuma, oh Yuma, my dear."*
*Oh Tagera, oh Tagera, oh Tagera in the forest*
*Our ancestors, our ancestors, the spirits of our ancestors*
*"Bless us, bless us, bless us."*

In this mantra, the words "O Yuma", "O Tagera", "Hamra Purvaj", and "Aashirvaad Deu" are repeated three times each. The number three is considered sacred in the Kirat religion (Tridev, Trishakti, Trikal), and this repetition is believed to make the mantra more powerful (Fedap, 2019, p. 156).

Example 6: Use of symbols

Various symbols are used in the Mundhum, which carry deep meanings. Some of the major symbols are:

| Sign | Meaning | Use |
|---|---|---|
| Egg (Feta) | Creation, fertility, new life | The origin of the universe in creation myths |
| Flower | Beauty, purity, prosperity | Offered in worship, a symbol of blessing |
| Stone (stone) | Stability, power, eternity | The abode of the ancestral spirits |
| Bird (or) | Spirit, messenger | The connection between heaven and earth |
| Hang (king) | leadership, power, authority | The king's genealogy, the glory of the ancestors |

(Source: Menyangbo, 2015, p. 203; Limbu, 2072, p. 178)

For example, according to a famous myth from Limbu Mundhum, the first human beings, Khechan and Vichan, were born from an egg. This egg symbol indicates that the entire creation originated from a single source (Limbu, 2072).

Example 7: Image experiment

Beautiful images of nature are abundant in Mundhum.

These images create vivid images in the minds of the listeners. Let us look at an excerpt from a love poem:

*"You are as pure as the white snow of the mountains."*
*You are as tender as a flower bud.*
*You are as restless as a river wave.*
*"You are as far away as a star in the sky."*

Here, the beloved is compared to snow (purity), a flower bud (tenderness), a river wave (volatility), and a star in the sky (inaccessibility). These images express different dimensions of love (Chamling, 2076, p. 2010).

Example 8: Image in creation myth

The creation myth of Mundhum uses extremely powerful imagery:

*"In the beginning, there was nothing*
*There was a deep sea of darkness.*
*There was no sky above, no earth below.*
*In the middle was air; in the middle was water.*
*From that water, a golden egg emerged.*
*The egg cracked, and the top became the sky.*
*The lower part became the earth; the middle part became man."*
(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Kerung, 2074)

In this myth, images such as "the deep sea of darkness", "the golden egg" and "the sky and the earth" express the grandeur and mystery of creation. These images have a deep impact on the listener's mind and easily explain the mystery of creation.

Example 9: Combination of repetition and symbol

The combination of repetition and symbolism can be seen in one of Mundhum's mantras as follows:

*"Seven-colored rainbow, seven-colored rainbow"*
*Build a seven-colored bridge, build a seven-colored bridge*
*To connect the people of our ancestors and our people,*
*to connect the people of our ancestors and our people*
*"Seven-colored rainbow, seven-colored rainbow"*

Here, "Indradhanush" (rainbow) is a symbol that establishes the connection between heaven and earth (ancestors and humans). The "seven colours" represent the seven worlds or seven generations. Its repetition makes the mantra prayerful and powerful (Tumbapo, 2077, p. 234).

## Conclusion

The mundhum is a linguistic and rhythmic structure that is very rich and scientific. Generations have been preserved through its oral tradition and rhyme. The beat and audio beauty of the Palam (Phangyang) have made it a religious text as well as a literary book. The mantras and myths have provided the Mundhum with profound philosophical significance and aesthetic value, which is due to repetitions, symbols and imagery (Hangkhim, 2018; Subba, 2075).

Such linguistic and rhythmic richness of Mundhum has rendered it a rich treasure not only to the Kirat community but also to the whole human society. The need to preserve and study it has only been added in the present-day modern world, as it assists us in knowing the origin and development of human knowledge in the early times.

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# Section B: Means of Expression

## Chapter 4: Dance and Rhythm: Sakela, Chyabrung and Kelang

Dance has a special significance in the cultural life of the Kirat community. Not only is it an expression of the triangular relationship among nature, ancestors, and man, as taught by the Mundhum philosophy, but dance is also the most powerful means of joy, celebration, and collectivity for the Kirats (Chamling, 2076). Dances in Kirat tradition are not only good entertainment but have very strong religious, social, and philosophical overtones. This chapter will examine three of the Kirat dances – Sakela, Chhyabrung and Kelang – in detail and provide an analysis of the rhythm, the meaning and the beauty of these three dances by giving examples.

### 4.1 Sakela's circular dance: collective passion and immersion

Sakela (Rai community) or Yalanh, Kaylang (Limbu community) is the most prominent dance of the Kiratis. This dance is mainly performed during the Ubhauli (Vaisakh) and Udhauli (Mangsir) festivals. The most distinctive feature of the Sakela dance is its circular structure – the dancers stand and dance in a circle, which symbolises collectivity, unity, and eternity (Rai, 2075).

Example 2: Sakela circular structure.

The Sakela dance has two circles, with men in the inner

circle and women in the outer circle. The two circles are opposite to each other – men on the right and women on the left. This is the duality of creation (man and nature) and the balance between the two (Chamling, 2076).

And how the pace of this dance is:

First step (moving forward): step forward with the right leg, then the left one.

Second step (stepping back): The left foot should take a step backwards, and then so must the right foot.

Third step (turning): turning in one step to righ,t followed by turning to the left.

The repetition of these three steps creates a beautiful rhythm, which can go on continuously for hours (Tumbapo, 2077).

Example 2: Collective Rasa in Sakela

There is no place for individual performance in the Sakela dance. It is a completely collective dance, where all the dancers move together to the same rhythm. This evokes a sense of "unity" and "equality" (Hangkhim, 2018).

Description of a Sakela dance:

The setting is the evening of the Ubhaali festival in one of the central mountain villages. The square is crowded with hundreds of individuals. Once the pedangma is finished reciting the mundhum, the dance starts. The boys and the girls first dance in two different circles, and then the two circles merge to make a big circle. single file, one shoulder to the other, and everybody moves together. The youth and the senior are in the juice of the Sakela. Some are not fatigued, and some do not wish to take a rest. The moon is already in the sky, and yet the dance is being carried on. This was a baritone voice, and it was very evident that the singer was extremely emotional. It was a baritone voice, and the singer was surely very emotional.

Example 3: Sakela (Immersion in Trance).

The unique aspect of the Sakela dance is that it may put the

dancers in some sort of trance. Different hours of constant dancing, the monotony of the same beat, the crushing of the drums lead to the transformation of the consciousness of the dancers. They lose their identities, lose time and unify themselves with their forefathers (Fedap, 2019).

The experience of an aged dancer:

*"When I am dancing Sakela, I forget myself. My body is doing it itself; I am just observing. At times, I become my father and my grandfather; they are also dancing with me. I see them; I hear their voices. At that time, I knew I was not all by myself; I knew that my ancestors were around me."*

(Limbu dancer, quoted by Fedap, 2019, p. 178)

## 4.2 Chabrung's rhythm and sexual-biological relationships

Chyabrung is another major dance of the Limbu community, which is mainly danced to the rhythm of a drum called Kay (Chyabrung). The most interesting aspect of the Chyabrung dance is its sexual-biological connection. This dance is associated with fertility, creation, and the continuation of life (Limbu, 2072).

Example 4: Structure of the Chaybrung Dhol

The Chaybrung Dhol is a symbol in itself. Let's look at its structure:

| Organ | Description | symbolic meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Linga (long part of the drum) | 3-4 feet long wooden shell | Male gender symbol |
| Mouth (the wide part of the drum) | Sealed with leather | Vaginal symbol |
| Playing method | It is played by clapping the hands. | Imitation of sexual acts |
| Sound | Serious, thunderous | The sound of creation |

(Source: Limbu, 2072, p. 214; Menyangbo, 2015, p. 256)

The manner of playing the chyabrung is a symbolic parody of sexual intercourse in another way, too. The gamer uses his feet to hold the drum and then hits it with his two palms. In this way, repeatedly striking the mouth of the drum with his hands symbolises the process of fertilisation (Tumbapo, 2077).

Example 5: Chyabrung dance moves

The movements of men and women in the Chyabrung dance are different:

- Men's movements: Men step forward, kneel, jump, and fall to the ground. These movements symbolise strength, courage, and masculinity.

- Women's movements: Women walk in circles, wave their hands, and step back. These movements symbolise tenderness, beauty, and nature.

- Couple moves: Sometimes men and women come in front of each other and perform special moves that symbolically simulate intercourse (Chamling, 2076).

A famous Chyaybrung song is sung like this:

*"The Chyabrung music played, and the village was filled with joy."*
*Young people dance; their hearts filled with excitement.*
*Even elephants dance in the Chyabrung lake*
*In the lake of Chyaybrung, people also dance*
*With the help of Chyabrung Lake, even barren land becomes lush green.*
*"With the lake of Chyaybrung, even barren wombs continue to flourish."*

In this song, Chyabrung is associated with fertility. The mention of "barren land" and "barren womb" shows that the Chyabrung dance is associated with fertility (Limbu, 2072, p. 228).

Example 6: Chyabrung and the Seasonal Cycle

Chyabrung dance is mainly performed in Udhauli (November), when the crops have been harvested, and people have free time. But the fact is it has a closer relationship with the seasons and the reproductive cycle. November is the month that

is deemed to be good for fishing, hunting and sexual intercourse. The Chyabrung dance is a traditional dance that greets the season (Hangkhim, 2018).

According to a belief, when Chyabrung is danced, Mother Earth (Yuma Sammang) is pleased, and she gives a good harvest. Therefore, farmers dance Chyabrung to pray for a good harvest. Thus, Chyabrung addresses both human reproduction and agricultural reproduction (crops) (Subba, 2075).

## 4.3 Yalang (Paddy Dance) and Labour-Beauty

Yalang, or Dhan Nach, is a special dance of Kirati women. This dance is performed in the fields during the rice planting and wheat sowing. The most distinctive feature of Kelang is that it highlights the relationship between labour and beauty (Rai, 2072).

Example 7: The origin myth of Yalang

According to a famous Mundhumi story, the origin of Keylang was as follows:

> *"Long ago, a young woman was planting paddy. She was singing and planting rice in rhythm. Hearing her song, the birds came; seeing her rhythm, the wind also stopped. Seeing her movements, the young women around her also started planting in the same way. From that day on, the kelang began."*
>
> (Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Tumbapo, 2077, p. 267)

This myth describes Keylang as an art born from labour. The labour of planting rice is a kind of dance that makes labour beautiful and enjoyable.

Example 8: The movement and rhythm of the keyang

The practice of planting rice evolved from the practice of planting rice:

1. Bending forward: bending towards the ground to pick up rice seedlings.

2. Walking backwards: moving backwards after planting.

3. Planting: The process of planting by hand.

4. Straightening: When a plant is straightened, it is taken and another plant is taken.

These four steps are the basic movements of Kelang, but in the form of dance, they are made a little more rhythmic and beautiful (Chamling, 2076).

The song of the kelang goes like this:

*"Lang-lang lang-lang, let's plant rice lang-lang."*
*Let's plant green rice and harvest yellow rice.*
*Lang-lang, let's plant together.*
*"Lang-lang, lang-lang, let's eat together."*

Here, the "lang-lang" sound imitates the sound of stepping on water (Rai, 2072, p. 143).

Example 9: Combining Labour and Beauty in Kaylang

Let's imagine a scene from Keylong:

*"A rainy afternoon. A green paddy field. A group of women in a waterlogged field. They stand in a row, each holding a paddy plant. One person starts the song; the others join in. To the rhythm of the song, they lean forward, plant the plant, and step back. One rhythm, one movement. Their colourful clothes are soaked in the water, and their bangles and jewellery are glistening. There is labour, but joy on their faces. There is fatigue, but the song does not stop. This is Kelang – a wonderful confluence of labour and beauty."*

(Rai oral tradition, quoted in Tumbapo, 2077, p. 281)

Example 10: Social importance of Keylang

Yalang not only transforms labour into dance, but it also strengthens social cohesion:

Cooperation (Parma): All the villagers work together in rice planting. This is called the "Parma" system. Keylang keeps this Parma system alive.

Social harmony: Women of different ages, classes, and groups work, dance, and sing together. This strengthens social bonds.

Knowledge transfer: The older generation teaches the younger generation the art of planting rice. This knowledge transfer is easy and fun through the medium of Kelang (Hangkhim, 2018).

Example 11: Comparison of three dances

Comparing these three dances – Sakela, Chhabrung and Kelang:

| Party | Sakela | Chhaybrung | Keylang |
|---|---|---|---|
| Community | Rye, lemon | Lemon | Rai, Limbu, Sunuwar |
| Time | Ubhauli, Udhauli | Udhauli, festival | Paddy sowing (Asar-Shrawan) |
| Place | Village square, temple premises | Village square | Rice field |
| Dancer | Men and women (separately) | A man and woman (together) | Woman |
| Main Quote | religious, congregational | fertility, sexual | labour, beauty |
| Musical instrument | Madal, Zhamta | Chhaybrung Dhol | Just a song, sometimes a melody |
| Symbolism | Relationship with ancestors and nature | Creation and reproduction | A combination of labour and beauty |

(Source: Chamling, 2076; Limbu, 2072)

## Conclusion

The Kirat community dances, such as Sakela, Chhyabrung and Kelang, are not only a form of entertainment but also a way to preserve their cultural heritage. They are profound philosophically, socially and biologically. Sakela is a circular dance that gives the feeling of collectivity and unity; Chhyabrung reflects the enigma of creation and reproduction; and Kelang depicts the elegance of labour because it turns it into art (Hangkhim, 2018; Subba, 2075).

These dances display the Kirati philosophy of life, as religion and entertainment, work and party, and a person and society are all mixed. The survival and continuity of the Kirati

culture are critical not only to the sustainability of the Kirati culture but also to the cultural diversity of human civilisation in general.

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# Chapter 5: Myths, Stories, and Sagas: The Essence of Oral Literature

The oral literature of the Kirat community – myths, stories and sagas – is not just a means of entertainment. It contains deep philosophical meanings, cultural values and expressions of human emotions. This genre of Mundhum is also closely linked to the Rasa-siddhanta of Sanskrit literature, which vividly presents the various nine Rasas (Rai, 2072; Chamling, 2076). In this chapter, we will analyse three major aspects of Kirat oral literature: the first image of beauty in the creation myth, the use of various Rasas in the Phungwa (folktale), and the dialectical beauty of nature and man in the stories of Tangsing and Yethang (tiger).

## 5.1 Creation Myth: Mythological First Image of Beauty.

All civilisations have their own myth of creation, and this is the reason why the universe had its origin and human life started. The Kirat Mundhum creation mythology is quite poetic and beautiful, in which images of beauty are visible at every creation stage (Limbu, 2072).

Example 1: The example of creation out of an egg – the initial perception of the beauty.

The Mundhum states that the world starts with nothingness. However, this nothingness is not just nothingness. The emptiness is the one that is pregnant with possibilities. And so is the saying

of the Limbu Mundhum:

*Nothing was there at the beginning of it all.*
*There was neither heaven nor earth.*
*There was neither light nor darkness.*
*But there was a possibility in that void.*
*A possibility of beauty*

*Then Tagera Ningwafuma created a golden egg.*
*That egg was as bright as the sun.*
*That egg was as cool as the moon.*
*That egg was as colourful as a rainbow.*

*The egg cracked – crack!*
*The upper part became the sky – blue, boundless, beautiful.*
*The lower part became the earth – green, fertile, lovely.*
*"From the middle part, mankind was born."*

(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Kerung, 2074, pp. 34-35)

The first image of beauty in this myth is the "golden egg". But this is not merely a biological object; it is the centre of the beauty of all creation. It is bright, cool, and colourful, and this contributes to the multidimensional nature of the universe (Tumbapo, 2077).

Example 2: Beauty in the elements of nature

The description of the various elements created after the egg broke open is equally beautiful:

Sky: This is a blue sky, infinite and enigmatic. Looking up, we acquire this crazy, open sensation, as though the sky has no end and is persisting long, long beyond anything that man can imagine. It keeps in mind that we will never be able to know all that there is.

Earth: She is fertile, luscious and peaceful. The earth gives us life in many ways, such as flowers, fertile earth and the calmness that one gets when outside. It is hard, maternal, and holds everything in place. The motherly care of nature towards herself and towards all of us is that of a tender firmness.

Mountains: White, solemn, towering – The snow-covered

whiteness, solemn stillness, and grandeur of the mountains can also be viewed as the divine beauty (Menyangbo, 2015). The height and purity of their bodies give the impression of a divine presence, which is transcendence and spiritual grandeur.

Thus, every element described in the creation myth reveals some aspect of beauty. This is an important aspect of the Kirati worldview – creation is beauty, and beauty is creation (Hangkhim, 2018).

## 5.2 Compassion, heroism, beauty, and humour in folktales

Phungwa (Limbu) or Phungwa (Rai) are folktales of the Kirat community that have been passed down orally for generations. These stories depict various aspects of life and are a beautiful expression of the nine elements of Sanskrit literature – especially karuna, vira, shringar and kamya rasa (Chamling, 2076).

Example 3: Karun Rasa – The love story of "Sirijanga and Malungma"

The most famous tragic story of the Limbu community is the love story of Sirijanga and Malungma. The story begins like this:

"Long ago, the Limbu king Sirijanga once went hunting in the forest. There, he saw a wonderfully beautiful young woman – Malungma. Fascinated by her beauty, Sirijanga fell in love with her. The two were married, and for some time, they lived happily ever after.

One day, however, while King Sirijanga was in the forest on a hunting mission, some jealous villagers abused him. Malungma felt humiliated and attempted to go back to her home – the forest. But just as she tried to get away, a huge river blocked her way. She wouldn't give up—she dived in, desperate to cross. Still, the current was too strong. She only made it halfway before she drowned.

Sirijanga came back and came to know his beloved wife had died. He was upset and came to the riverbank and cursed:

*'Hey Malungma, where have you gone?*
*This kingdom is deserted without you.*
*This life is meaningless without you.*
*Hey Malungma, come back, come back...'*

Hearing her pitiful lament, the animals and birds of the forest also cried. The river also dried up and became smaller. But Malungma did not return. Finally, Sirijanga also died of grief.

(Limbu Oral Tradition, quoted in Fedap, 2019, pp. 213-214)

This story has a very strong expression of compassion. The king's lamentation at the loss of his beloved, the sympathy of nature, and finally the king's death – all take compassion to its extreme height. Even today, people of the Limbu community get emotional when they hear this story (Tumbapo, 2077).

Example 4: Veer Rasa – The saga of "Khechan and Vichan"

Khechana and Vichan are considered to be the ancestors of the Kiratis. Their story is dominated by heroic themes:

"Khechan and Vichan were two brothers. One day, they were hunting in the forest. Suddenly, a huge tiger came and tried to attack Vichan.

Khechun saw what was happening. He just had a small spear, but fear didn't get to him. He yelled, "Hey, tiger, stay away from my brother!"

The tiger spun around to face Khechun. He lifted his spear and went at it. The fight dragged on for hours. In the end, Khechun killed the tiger, but he took some bad wounds himself.

Wichan broke down in tears. "Brother, you risked everything for me," he said.

Khechun smiled and said, 'It is the duty of a brother to protect his brother. ' ' Even if I die, my spirit will always be with you.'

"Khechan died, but the story of his bravery is still sung

today."

(Rai Oral Tradition, quoted by Chamling, 2076, pp. 156-157)

This story has all the elements of heroic passion – a beautiful combination of incitement (tiger attack), inspiration (love for brother), emotion (heroic scenes of war), and communication (pride, compassion). It evokes a sense of reverence and respect for heroism in the hearts of the audience (Subba, 2075).

People in the Limbu community love telling the story of Chasok and Yanglang.

Chasok was hard to miss, young, striking, and the instant centre of attention. Yanglang stood out in her own way, too, with a quiet beauty that drew people in without her even trying. They crossed paths at the Ubhauli festival, right in the middle of music and swirling dancers.

Chasok noticed Yanglang right away. Her smile threw him off, bright, calm, and somehow as steady as the moon shining in a clear sky. Her eyes sparkled. And the way her hair moved, dark and smooth, it reminded him of rain clouds drifting along, never in a rush.

Yanglang couldn't stop herself from looking back at him. Chasok appeared so calm, as if nothing in the world could shake him. His eyes were sharp and vibrant, even feral, like a tiger lurking just out of sight. But then he smiled softly, almost shyly, like a flower turning to the sun.

Both were fascinated by each other. Chasok sang:

*'My life is lonely without you.*
*My heart is empty without you.*
*You come into my life,*
*You come into my dream.'*

*Yanglang replied:*
*'You are my dream,*
*You are my soul.*
*I want to live with you.*

*I want to die with you.'*

"The two got married, and they lived happily ever after."

(Limbu Oral Tradition, quoted in Fedap, 2019, pp. 234-235)

This story has a beautiful expression of the aesthetic feeling. The description of the beauty of the lover and the beloved, their desire for union, and ultimately the marriage, all reinforce the aesthetic feeling. The use of images of nature (moon, stars, clouds, mountains, tigers, flowers) in this story has further strengthened the aesthetic feeling (Hangkhim, 2018).

Here's a classic, hilarious story about greed: Greedy Bambo.

So, there's a farmer named Bambo. He was really greedy. One afternoon, when he was working in his fields, a duck approached and deposited a golden egg directly in front of him.

You can imagine Bambo's expression: he starts thinking, "If this duck lays golden eggs every day, I'll be set for life. I'll be rolling in money."

But Bambo's not exactly the patient type. He can't stand the idea of waiting around for another golden egg tomorrow. Instead, he figures, "Why wait? There must be a whole pile of golden eggs inside this duck. If I just take care of it now, I'll get them all at once."

He killed the duck. He ripped open its belly. But there was nothing inside – no golden egg, no anything else. Bambo started crying, but what would happen now?

The villagers laughed at this story. An old man said, 'Bamboo, you are not only greedy but also stupid. You killed the goose that laid eggs every day, and then you hit your own foot with an axe.'

From that day on, the village proverb became: 'Don't be like the bamboo, which killed the golden goose.'"

(Rai Oral Tradition, quoted by Chamling, 2076, pp. 189-190)

Humour is the dominant theme in this story. Bambo's foolishness, his impatience and greed, and ultimately his plight –

all create humour. But there is also a deeper lesson hidden in this humour – greed and impatience only lead to destruction. Thus, a moral lesson is also given through humour (Menyangbo, 2015).

## 5.3 The Story of Tongsing and Yethang (the Tiger):

The Contrasting Beauty of Nature and Man

The story of Tongsing and Yethang (the tiger) is another important saga in Kirat oral literature. The story depicts the conflict between nature (the tiger) and man (Tongsing), the beauty of that conflict, and ultimately the lessons to be learnt from the conflict (Limbu, 2072).

Example 7: Introduction to Tongsing and Yethang

*"A long time ago, in a village, there lived a hunter named Tongsing. He was very brave. He would go hunting in the forest with his bow and arrow."*

In that forest, there was a huge tiger, Yethang. That tiger was very powerful. He would not let anyone enter his territory.

One day, Tongsing was hunting in the forest. Suddenly, he encountered Yethang. The two looked at each other. Tongsing said, 'This forest is my ancestral forest. I hunt here.'

Yethang roared: 'This forest is my kingdom. I am the king here. What are you doing in my kingdom?'

"That's how the conflict began."

(Limbu oral tradition, quoted by Fedap, 2019, p. 267)

This introduction clarifies the root cause of the conflict – nature (the tiger) wants to protect its territory, and man (the elephant) depends on nature for his livelihood. This conflict has been going on since the beginning of creation (Hangkhim, 2018).

Example 8: Depiction of conflict

The depiction of the conflict between Tengxing and Yethang is very vivid and beautiful:

*"Tongsing raised his bow. Yethang sharpened his claws."*
*Tongsing shot an arrow – swoosh!*
*The Yethang jumped – whoosh!*

The arrow flew through the air, but did not touch Yethang's body.

Yethang's claws came towards Tongsing, but Tongsing escaped.

The battle lasted for hours. Both were tired. Both were wounded.

But both were not ready to give up.

Tongsing said, 'I will not give up; this is my land.'

Yethang said, 'I will not lose; this is my kingdom.'

The war continued."

(Limbu oral tradition, quoted in Tumbapo, 2077, p. 284)

This part really captures the push and pull of the conflict—the grit on both sides and just how brutal the fighting gets. When you hear words like “swoosh” and "whoosh", you can almost feel the chaos swirling around you (Chamling, 2076).

Example 9: Ending conflict and peace

The way the story wraps up is pretty striking. It doesn’t try to paint anyone as the hero. Instead, it drives home the idea that nobody actually wins in war, and the only way forward is for both sides to meet in the middle.

“After days and days of fighting, Tongsing and Yethang were just worn out. They sat down, facing each other.

Tongsing asked, ‘Why are we fighting?’ ”This forest is yours and mine.'

Yethang said: 'But you kill my prey.'

Tongsing said, 'I will not kill your game. I will only kill those animals that are needed to feed my family.'

Yethang said, 'I do the same. I only kill when I am hungry.'

Both realised they are not enemies but fellow travellers. Both are children of nature.

Tongsing said, 'I will hunt less in your kingdom.'

Yethang said: 'I will not attack your village.'

"The two shook hands – the man and the tiger. From that day on, they lived in peace."

(Limbu oral tradition, quoted by Fedap, 2019, p. 271)

This ending presents a profound vision of dialectical beauty. Conflict itself is not the end; learning from conflict, resolving conflict, and realising peace after conflict is what real beauty is. This story conveys the message that the relationship between humans and nature should not be one of hostility but one of balance and coexistence (Hangkhim, 2018).

Example 10: Symbolic meaning of the story

The story of Tengxing and Yethang can also be interpreted symbolically:

| Sign | Meaning | Explanation |
|---|---|---|
| Tengxing (man) | human civilization | The struggle for human existence |
| Yethang (tiger) | Nature | Nature's own laws and limits |
| Forest | Earth/Natural Sources | Shared residence of both |
| Hunt | Means of livelihood | The basis of the existence of both |
| war | Nature-human duality | Consequences of imbalance |
| Agreement | Balance | Basis of coexistence |

(Source: Limbu, 2072, p. 234; Menyangbo, 2015, p. 278)

Thus, this story is a deep philosophical analysis of the relationship between nature and humans. It not only shows the beauty of conflict but also shows the way to resolve conflict (Subba, 2075).

## Conclusion

Kirat oral literature – myths, stories and epics – is extremely rich in terms of the Rasa principle. The first image of beauty in the creation myth reveals the beauty of the universe. Phungwa (a folktale) contains beautiful expressions of compassion, heroism, beauty and humour, which depict the diverse experiences of human life. The story of Tangsing and Yethang (the tiger) really shows how nature and people clash but also how they can find balance after all the fighting (Rai, 2072; Limbu, 2072).

These tales say a lot about how the Kirati look at life. It's not just about struggle or peace—it's both, all mixed up together, and there's real beauty in that. Keeping these stories around doesn't just help the Kirati hold onto their roots; it adds something special to the whole human story. civilisation as a whole.

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# Chapter 6: Rituals, Colors, and Shapes

Rituals have a significance in the cultural life of the Kirat community. The costumes, shapes, and colours used in these rituals are not just decorative means; they carry deep symbolic meaning, philosophical perspectives, and cultural identity (Chamling, 2076). Let's dig into three big parts of Kirat rituals in this chapter: what the Tangnam's (saint's) outfits and shapes mean; what makes the Chijakalpa (grave) and Mit (the sword bearer) culturally beautiful; and how they use natural colours—think flowers, clay, and plants—in their ceremonies.

## 6.1 Meaning behind the Tangnam's dress and form

The Samba, Yeba, Phedangma (Limbu) or Nakchong (Rai) is the dhami, or priest, in the Kirat community. They're the ones who chant the Mundhum and lead all sorts of religious rituals. Their clothes and the way they carry themselves aren't random—it all says something about Kirat beliefs and how they see the world (Limbu, 2072).

Take the Tangnam's crown, for example—some call it a turban and others a mangpa. This special hat shows its shape and style mean something deeper.

| Organ | Description | Symbolic meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Shape | Round, upper part, sixteenth | Roundness of the universe, infinity of the sky |
| Color | White, red, black stripes | White (purity), red (power), black (mystery) |
| Peacock feather | Attached to the upper part | Connection with the sky, divine vision |
| Shell | Attached to the front | Symbol of purity, purity, moon |

(Source: Menyangbo, 2015, p. 345; Fedap, 2019, p. 389)

According to a Mundhumi description:

*"Tangnam's hat is round like the sky."*
*A shell shines in it like a star.*
*It flutters its feathers like a bird.*
*"That makes Tangnam a messenger of the gods."*

(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Kerung, 2074, p. 289)

Example 2: Tangnam's clothing (Fiya/Pachyaura)

The white garment worn by the Tangnam is called Fiya (Limbu) or Pachyaura (Nepali). Its characteristics:

- Color (White): White symbolizes purity, purity, and divinity. It signifies that the Tangram has risen above worldly desires (Tumbapo, 2077).

- Length (up to the feet): The long robe makes the tangram look different from an ordinary person, and indicates his divine power.

- Pattern (plain): Plain clothing has no patterns, which symbolizes simplicity and asceticism.

Example 3: Tangnam's jewelry

The Tangnam wear various types of jewelry, each with its own significance:

1. Pali (gold chain): This chain worn around the neck

symbolizes the sun. Its circular shape represents the cycle of creation.

2. Bangles (Bangles): Bangles worn on the hand symbolize the circle of the universe and infinity.

3. Tilhari (earring): This ornament worn in the ear symbolizes knowledge and hearing.

4. Paite (Tika): This ornament worn on the forehead symbolizes the third eye (divine vision) (Chamling, 2076).

In a ritual, the tangram prays as follows:

*"Oh sun, you shine on my face."*
*Oh universe, you wander in my lap.*
*Oh knowledge, you sit in my palm tree.*
*"Oh divine vision, you are a reflection of my feet."*
(Fedap, 2019)

Tangnam's look and the way it moves mean a lot, too.

At the start of the ritual, the tangram stands tall—hands together, eyes shut. It's like it's getting ready to meet the deity. As the Mundhum is recited, the tangram slowly turns in place. That turning isn't random—it shows the endless cycle of the universe. Then, when things really heat up and the energy peaks, the tangram starts to vibrate, caught up in that ecstatic state. This indicates that the power of the deity has entered the body (Hangkhim, 2018).

## 6.2 Cultural beauty of Chijakalpa (grave) and Mipma

Chijakalpa (Limbu) or Chihan (Nepali) is a traditional burial ground of the Kirat community. Mit or Tagadhari refers to a person who transforms into an ancestor after death. The concept of Chijakalpa and Mipma is a very important aspect of Kirat religion, reflecting the belief in life after death and ancestor worship (Limbu, 2072).

Example 5: Structure of the object

The structure of a traditional Kirat Chijakalpa is as follows:

| Organ | Description | symbolic meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Stone wall | Made of large stones | Stability, eternity, the permanence of the ancestor |
| Rectangular shape | Long rectangular | Representation of the human body |
| North-South | North-south facing | Direction of travel of the deceased (ancestor's land) |
| Silauto (Silingo) | A vertical stone placed at the head | Upliftment of the soul, connection with ancestors |

(Source: Menyangbo, 2015, p. 356; Tumbapo, 2077, p. 301)

Description of an old invention:

*"That object was very old. It was made of large stones. Each stone was a testimony to a story. The largest stone stood upright at the head – it was the tomb. Some symbols were carved on that tomb – the sun, the moon, and the stars. Those symbols indicated that the soul of the deceased had now reached the sky."*

(Rai Oral Tradition, quoted by Chamling, 2076, p. 323)

Example 6: The concept of Mit (Tagadhari)

According to the Kirat religion, after death a person becomes a mip (ancestor). Various aspects of this concept:

The soul's journey is as follows: after death, it spends three days in the house before moving on and leaving the hamlet after seven days. After forty-five days, it arrives in its ancestral country.

Ancestors don't really leave us. People believe they stay in the home, unseen, and family members remember and honour them during different festivals.

There's also a special thread tied in an ancestor's name. It's not just a ritual—this thread stands for their presence and blessings (Fedap, 2019).

A brief description:

*"When the body dies, the soul does not die."*
*It flies into the sky, reaching the ancestral land.*
*He sits there and watches us.*
*His strength is invisible but strong.*
*That rope has bound us.*
*"We are his children; he is our ancestor."*

(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Kerung, 2074)

Example 7: Figures carved into the object

Various figures are found engraved on ancient objects:

- Sun (Namlung): Radiances within a circle - Source of life, eternity of the soul

- Moon (Laba): crescent shape – cycle of time, rebirth

- Star (Tagera): polygonal shape – eye of god, protection

- Human figure (Meet): Simple human figure – ancestor appearance

- Animals (clean): tiger, bear, bird – totems related to ancestors

(Tumbapo, 2077; Menyangbo, 2015)

An archaeologist's comment:

*"These Chijakalpas are not just tombs. They are living documents of the Kirati worldview. Every symbol carved here says a lot about their religion, philosophy and lifestyle. The shapes of the sun, moon and stars show astronomical knowledge and faith in the sky. The human figures and animal images reflect their ancestor worship and totemism."*

(Hongkhim, 2018, p. 35)

Example 8: Rituals to commemorate the meeting

Various rituals are performed in memory of the Mit (ancestor):

1. Nwagi (Offering of new grain): Every year, after the new crop is brought in, the first portion is offered to the ancestors.

2. Sakela (Ancestor Worship): Special worship of ancestors

is done in Ubhauli and Udhauli.

3. Tying a rope: A white rope is tied around the hand or neck in memory of an ancestor.

4. Mundhum Vachan: The name, clan, and lineage of the ancestors are recited (Chamling, 2076).

A scene from a ritual:

"A fire was lit in the middle of the village. All the villagers had gathered around it. Phedangma began to call out the names of ancestors – his father, his grandfather, and up to fifteen generations ago. After each name, everyone paid their respects by saying 'Namah'. Then new grains and fruits were offered. A white thread was tied. The thread was a visible but invisible symbol of the relationship – the relationship between the living and the dead."

(Rai Oral Tradition, quoted by Fedap, 2019)

## 6.3 Natural colors: Use of flowers, soil and plants

The colours utilised in Kirat rituals come from natural sources. These colours, made from flowers, clay, and diverse plants, not only give brightness and beauty to the rituals, but they also carry deep symbolic connotations (Limbu, 2072).

Example 9: Color obtained from flowers

The Kirati make dyes from various flowers.

| Color | Flowers/Vegetation | Method of use | symbolic meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| Red | Red-bellied, red-bellied | Fennel Grinder Juicing | Strength, fertility, victory |
| Yellow | Velvet, centipede | Picking flowers and soaking them in water | Purity, knowledge, prosperity |
| White | Bacainla, thorn jasmine | Extracting flower juice | Purity, peace, ancestral spirits |
| Blue | Aparajita (blue flower) | Grinding petals to make a paste | Sky, eternity, divinity |
| (Source: Menyangbo, 2015; Tumbapo, 2077) | | | |

Use of flower colours in a ritual:

*"The morning of Ubhauli. Girls go to pick gurans flowers. Red gurans, yellow gurans. Those flowers are ground in water to make a dye. Ritual objects are dyed with that dye. Red is used for strength and fertility, and yellow for prosperity and knowledge."*

(Limbu oral tradition, quoted in Kerung, 2074, p. 334)

Example 10: Colour obtained from clay

Colours are also made from different types of clay and green clay.

Red clay (Hingul, Sindoor): Vermilion is made by drying and grinding red clay from mountainous places. It is utilised in wedding ceremonies, pujas, and other rites. Vermilion represents good luck, a happy marriage, and power.

White clay, known as Camero or Meti, comes from riverbanks. They dry it out, grind it, and use the fine white powder as a symbol of holiness and cleanliness. It can be found on religious objects.

Yellow clay, sometimes called copper clay, gets ground down too. Folks use it for tikas and other religious marks. It's all about wisdom and prosperity (Chamling, 2076).

A folk song describes it this way:

*"Wear red vermilion, a sign of good luck."*
*Wear a white turban, a symbol of purity.*
*Apply yellow soil, a mine of wisdom*
*"May the ancestors see this colourful ritual."*

(Rai Folk Song, quoted in Hangkhim, 2018)

People are using plant roots, leaves, and bark to create dyes.

Take green, for example. You get it by crushing the leaves of different trees. It stands for nature, fresh life, and all that's green around us.

Black comes from the juice of winter fruits, like blackcurrants. It carries this sense of mystery, power, and something deep you

can't quite name.

Brown? That's made by boiling tree bark, like from the Uttis tree. Brown stands for stability and the earth itself (Fedap, 2019).

There's a story from an old woman:

> *"Back then, we got every colour straight from the forest—green from leaves, red from flowers, black from fruits, and yellow from the soil. Whatever we needed, the forest gave us. Now, we buy the colours from the market. But honestly, those store-bought colours don't feel the same. The colours we took from nature had a power of their own."*
>
> (Limbu oral tradition, Tumbapo, 2077)

"People also mix colours in different ways for rituals, using special combinations for each one. But in rituals, those colours don't have that effect. Colours brought from nature have their own power." (Limbu oral tradition, quoted in Tumbapo, 2077)

Example 12: Color combinations in rituals

Different colour combinations are used in different rituals:

| Rituals | Color combination | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Marriage | Red + Yellow | Red (strength, fertility) + yellow (prosperity) |
| Death rites | White + Black | White (purity, journey to the ancestors) + black (mystery, separation) |
| Udhauli/Udhauli | Red + Green + Yellow | Red (crops), green (nature), yellow (harvest) |
| New grain | Yellow + White | Yellow (grain) and white (ancestor) |

(Chamling, 2076; Limbu, 2072)

Explanation of a phadangma:

*"Each colour has its own language. Red speaks – I am power. White speaks – I am pure. Yellow speaks – I am knowledge. Green speaks – I am nature. In rituals, these colours are combined in such a way that they tell a story. Understanding this language of colour is the essence of ritual."*

(Fedap, 2019)

Example 13: Relationship between color and deity

In the Kirat religion, various gods have their own colours:

- Yuma Sammang (Mother Earth): Green and Red – Green (Nature), Red (Fertility)

- Tagera Ningwafuma (Creator): White and gold – white (purity), gold (divinity)

- Ancestor (Mit/Tagadhari): White - Purity, peace

- Forest God (Bhumche): Green and brown – Nature, Forest

(Source: Menyangbo, 2015; Kerung, 2074)

A brief description:

*"Yuma Sammang wears green clothes."*
*That green is the colour of the forest.*
*Tagera Ningwafu wears white clothes*
*That is the colour of the clouds in the white sky.*
*The ancestors also look white.*
*"That is the light of the white moon."*

(Tumbapo, 2077)

## Conclusion

Kirat rituals, colours, and shapes aren't just decoration—they mean something real. They show big ideas and help people figure out where they belong. Look at the tangnam, the priest. The way he dresses isn't random; it shows purity, spiritual power, and a special connection to the gods. Then you have Chijakalpa, the grave, and Mip, the sword-bearer. These aren't just traditions. They're about honouring ancestors, facing life and death, and believing the soul lives on. You see their deep connection to

nature in the colours they use—flowers, earth, plants—real, living things (Hangkhim, 2018; Limbu, 2072).

Put it all together, and you get this bold, lively picture of Kirat culture. Keeping these traditions alive matters—not just for the Kirat, but for the rich variety and beauty of all human culture.

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# Section C: Rasa and Mimansa

## Chapter 7: Re-examination of the theory of Rasa in Mundhum

Kirat Mundhum is not just a religious text; it is a complete philosophy of life, which encompasses the various rasas of human life. The Rasa theory of Indian aesthetics presents the concept of Navaras, but the expression of these rasas in Mundhum is found to be adapted to the Kirat environment, nature and lifestyle. In this chapter, we will analyse the Kirat interpretation of Navaras, the state of oneness with nature as peaceful rasa, the depiction of war and anger as Vibhatsa and Raudra rasa, and the expression of miracle and awe in myth as wonderful rasa.

### 7.1 Kirati interpretation of Nava-Rasa

The Rasa-Siddhanta of Sanskrit literature has references to Navarasa, which includes beauty, humour, compassion, fury, bravery, horror, amazement, and peace. These same rasas, or emotions, are found in Kirat Mundhum, although they are expressed differently. It's all shaped by the Kirat people's own lifestyle, surroundings, and philosophy.

Example 1: Navratri in the Kirati environment

| Rasa | Sanskrit tradition | Kirati environment | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| Shringar | The love of a king and queen | Love with nature: the union of lovers | Love story in Phungwa (folktale) |
| Hasya | Courtly humor | The simple humor of village life | The Greedy Bamboko Tale |
| Karuna | State mourning | Separation from nature, remembrance of ancestors | The tragic story of Sirijanga and Malungma |
| Raudra | Fury of War | The struggle with nature, the ferocity of hunting | The Battle of Tengxing and Yethang |
| Bir | Battlefield heroism | The heroism of hunting, struggle, and self-defense | The story of Khechan and Wichan |
| Bhayanak | Fear of demons | Fear of forests, tigers, and bears | A terrifying description of the forest at night |
| Bivatsa | Horrible scene of the battlefield | The bloodshed of the hunt, the scene of sacrifice | The sexual-biological relationship of Chhabrung dance |
| Adbhut | Miracles of the gods and goddesses | The amazing power of nature, the mystery of the universe | Miracles in the creation myth |
| Shanta | salvation, nirvana | A state of oneness with nature | meditative state of the yogi/seeker |
| | | | |

(Source: Chamling, 2076; Fedap, 2019)

Example 2: Rasa in the definition of Mundhum

Mundhum itself is defined from the perspective of Rasa:

Mundhum is a philosophy of life, guidance, and faith centre based on the Shruti Smriti tradition of the Kirat people, which contains creation stories, travelogues, laws, codes of conduct, and healing methods. It is an intellectual, poetic, and musical tradition. Mundhum is a source of knowledge that never dries up.

In this definition, "poetic and musical" refers to the presence of Rasa. Mundhum has also been described as "the power of superpowers" and "the manifestation of truth, wisdom, peace, knowledge, love, and truth".

## 7.2 Shanta Rasa: A state of oneness with nature

Shanta Rasa is considered the highest of the nine Rasas. In Kirat Mundhum, Shanta Rasa is expressed as a state of oneness with nature. This state is achieved through yoga, meditation, and silent observation of nature.

Example 3: Description of the state of being one with nature

A Mundhumi description describes the state of oneness with nature as follows:

*"When I sit in the forest, I don't say anything.*
*I hear the birds singing; it becomes my song.*
*I hear the sigh of the wind; it is my sigh.*
*I hear the murmur of the river; it becomes my murmur.*
*When I sit on top of a mountain, I see nothing.*
*But I see everything – the mountains, the sky, the clouds*
*I merge into them all.*
*I am nothing, but I am everything.*

*This is peace – Yuma Sammang's arms*
*"This is peace – the courtyard of Tagera Ningwafuma."*
(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Kerung, 2074)

In this description, the expression of Shant Rasa is seen in

three stages:

1. External silence: "I say nothing" – the cessation of speech

2. Inner concentration: merging with the sounds of nature

3. Complete Oneness: "I am nothing, but everything" – the realization of Advaita

Example 4: Description of meditation

The Mundhum also contains a beautiful description of the state of meditation:

*"The eyes are closed, but everything is visible."*
*Ears are closed, but everything is heard.*
*The body is still, but the soul flies.*
*What is this? What is this?*

*This is the state where time stops.*
*This is the state where suffering disappears.*
*This is the state where I am me, but I am not me.*
*"This is peace; this is salvation."*

(Rai Mundhum, quoted in Chamling, 2076)

This description depicts the extreme state of peaceful bliss – samadhi or turia. Here, even after the business of the senses has ceased, inner perception continues.

Example 5: The state of the yogi and the seeker

The Mundhum also describes yogis and sadhaks, who are the embodiment of Shanta Rasa:

*"The Samba (priest) lives in the caves of the mountains."*
*He remains silent for years.*
*He has nothing – no home, no family.*
*But he has everything – Yuma's blessing*

*He has no anger; he has no desire.*
*He is not hungry; he is not thirsty.*
*He is just watching.*
*"There is peace in his eyes; there is peace in his heart."*

(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Fedap, 2019)

Here Samba (priest) is presented as a symbol of Shanta Rasa. His detachment, silence and inert state are the extreme expressions of Shanta Rasa.

## 7.3 Vibhatsa and Raudra Rasa: Mundhum's depiction of war and anger

The rasas vibhatsa (disgusting) and raudra (anger) are found expressed in the mundhum mainly in the context of war, hunting and struggle. The life of the Kiratis is spent in struggle with nature, and these rasas are used to depict this struggle.

Example 6: Violent depiction of war

The best expression of the rasa of anger is found in the description of the battle between Tengsing and Yethang (the tiger):

*"Tang Xing's eyes turned red.*
*His breath was like fire.*
*He raised his bow – twang!*
*The arrow was shot – sss!*

*The roaring sound – whoa! Whoa!*
*That thunder shook the mountain.*
*The forest trembled with that thunder.*
*That thunder split the sky.*

*Both of them clashed – loudly!*
*Both fought fiercely!*
*Blood flowed – lalala!*
*The meat is broken, Uncle!"*

(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Tumbapo, 2077)

This description contains all the elements of the Raudra Rasa:

- Eyes red, breath like fire: arousal of anger

- Thunder, shaking, sky-splitting: the arousal of anger

- Raising the bow, shooting an arrow: the experience of anger

- Twang, swish, howl, clatter, clatter, lala, chyacha: Enhancement of anger through phonetic words

Example 7: Horrific depiction of hunting

The description of the hunt contains expressions of horror:

*"Spear-throw!*
*Blood spurted – damn!*
*The intestines came out – shocking!*
*The soul flew into the air – whisper!*

*The ground turned red with blood.*
*Pieces of meat scattered around*
*The vultures came – caw, caw!*
*The dogs came – bark, bark!*

*Someone is shocked to see that scene.*
*Someone runs away seeing that scene.*
*But the hunter keeps watching.*
*"There is cruelty in his eyes."*

(Rai Mundhum, quoted in Chamling, 2076)

This description expresses a sense of horror:

- Blood, intestines, pieces of meat: a stimulant of horror

- Arrival of vultures and dogs: Arousal of horror

- To be afraid, to run away: a feeling of horror

- Chwachcha, fatt, latrakka, fuss: enhancement of the sense of horror through phonetic words

Example 8: Combination of raudra and vibhatsa

Sometimes a combination of raudra and vibhatsa rasas is also found:

*"Heaps of corpses on the battlefield*
*Severed head, severed hands*
*Legs severed, torso severed*
*A pool of blood flowed.*

*The winner dances in that blood.*

*There is anger on his face.*
*There is fire in his eyes.*
*There is hatred in his heart.*

*He dances; he roars.*
*He shouts, 'Victory is mine! 'Victory is mine!*
*But there is only death around him.*
*"That death is looking at him."*
(Limbu mundhum, Kerung, 2074)

This description blends raudra—the wild fury and triumph of the winner—with vibhatsa, which is all about piles of bodies and blood everywhere. It paints war just as it is, raw and unfiltered.

7.4 Wonderful Rasa: Miracles and Awe in Myth

You find this sense of wonder in the oldest stories about the universe. Myths bring it to life through tales of creation, gods pulling off impossible feats, and all sorts of supernatural happenings.

Example 9: The Wonder in Creation Myths

The best expression of the wonderful essence is found in the description of the creation myth:

*"In the beginning there was nothing – zero, zero, zero*
*And one day, Tagera Ningwafuma saw an egg.*
*That egg was golden; it was bright.*
*That egg was as big as the sky.*

*That egg cracked – cracked!*
*From it emerged the sky – blue, boundless, unfathomable.*
*From it emerged the earth – green, beautiful, and alive.*
*From that came man – the most amazing creature in creation.*

*How did this happen? No one knows.*
*What is this? No one understands.*
*Let there be only wonder, only amazement*

*"This is the wonder; this is the mystery."*

(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Menyangbo, 2015)

This description contains all the elements of a wonderful juice:

- Creation from nothing, golden egg: the stimulus of the wonderful

- The Origin of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity: The Awakening of the Wonderful

- Eyes widening, mouth open: a sense of wonder

- How did this happen? What is this? : Expression of astonishment

Example 10: The Miracle of Yuma Sammang

There is also a wonderful richness in the description of the miracle of Yuma Sammang (Mother Earth):

*"Yuma Sammang waved her hand – Furr!*
*There were flowers blooming – red, yellow, and blue.*
*Yuma Sammang stomped her foot – thwumm!*
*There the root burst forth – cold, sweet, cool*

*Yuma Sammang opened her eyes – wow!*
*There was a day – bright, warm, and lively.*
*Yuma Sammang closed her eyes – Palla!*
*There was a night – quiet, cool, and sleepy.*

*Everyone was surprised to see this.*
*Everyone was surprised to hear this.*
*This is the play of Yuma Sammang.*
*"This is Yuma Sammang's love."*

(Rai Mundhum, quoted in Hangkhim, 2018)

In this description, creation is shown through every action of Yuma Sammang – a flower blooms when he waves his hand, a root bursts when he steps on it, day occurs when he opens his eyes, and night occurs when he closes them. This is a great

expression of the wonderful Rasa.

Example 11: Amazing views of nature

The Mundhum also describes the wonderful scenes of nature:

*"When you reach the top of the mountain and look*
*Clouds appear below – white, thick, soft.*
*The sky above is visible – blue, clear, and deep.*
*Mountains are visible all around – tall, solemn, peaceful.*

*People don't say anything when they get there.*
*People don't think anything about it when they get there.*
*People just look there.*
*People are simply amazed upon reaching there.*

*This is a wonderful play of nature.*
*"This is a game of Tagera Ningwafuma."*
(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Tumbapo, 2077)

This description depicts the amazing beauty of nature. The view from the top of the mountain leaves one speechless, and this speechlessness is the feeling of wonderful pleasure.

Example 12: The amazing effect of Mundhum recitation

The wonderful effect of Mundhum Vachan is also described:

*"When the mundhum recites in the pheasant's nest*
*He is not an ordinary man; he is a god.*
*His speech is not ordinary speech.*
*That is the voice of the narcissist.*

*Even the trees tremble at the sound of his voice.*
*Even stones melt when they hear his voice.*
*People are amazed when they hear his voice.*
*Even ancestors come to hear his voice.*

*This is the amazing power of the moon.*
*"This is the supernatural love of Mundhum."*
(Rai Mundhum, quoted in Fedap, 2019)

This description depicts the wonderful effect of Mundhum Vachan. Phedangma transforms from an ordinary man into a god; his speech even affects nature – all these are wonderful stimulants of rasa.

Example 13: Philosophical explanation of the wonderful juice

A philosophical explanation of the wonderful juice is also found in the Mundhum:

*"This world is wonderful.*
*It's wonderful to see the sun rise every morning.*
*It's wonderful to see the moon come up every evening.*
*It's wonderful to see flowers bloom every year.*

*This amazing sightless eye*
*That's not an eye; that's just a hole.*
*This wonderful feeling is unbearable.*
*That's not a mind; that's just a stone.*

*Seeing the wonderful is knowledge.*
*Feeling wonderful is devotion.*
*"To merge in the wonderful is salvation."*
(Limbu Mundhum, Kerung, 2074)

In this take, the "wonderful rasa" stands for knowledge, devotion, and salvation. If you can't see the world's wonder, your eyes are just holes. If you can't feel it, your mind's nothing but stone. So, this emotion isn't just a drink—it's a step toward something higher, a kind of spiritual growth.

## Conclusion

When you look at Rasa-siddhanta in Mundhum this way, you start to see just how rich Kirati aesthetics really are. The Kirati way of reading the Navarasa ties these emotions and moods straight to nature, ancestors, and everyday life. Shanta Rasa is about being entirely in harmony with nature, where our sense of self merges with everything around us. Then there are Vibhatsa and Raudra rasas, who appear in stories of battle and hunting, revealing some

of life's harsher realities. And Adhbhut Rasa? That comes alive in stories and miracles, exploring the mysteries of creation and the wild, joyful dances of gods and goddesses.

All these flavours together establish Mundhum as a complete philosophy of life. Mundhum is the "inexhaustible fountain of knowledge", which encompasses all the flavours of human life. Its study and preservation are the preservation of the cultural heritage not only of the Kirat community but also of the entire human civilisation.

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# Chapter 8: Nature, Seasons and Human Emotions

The Kirat community's philosophy of life is so intertwined with nature that every change in nature leaves a deep impression on human emotions. Mundhum does not view the seasons simply as seasonal changes but rather as a cycle of human life, death, and rebirth. In this chapter, we will analyse the relationship between the seasonal festivals (Udhauli, Ubhauli) and the Yakthung Limbu life cycle, the expression of compassion and decorativeness in the image of flowers blooming and falling, and the Kirat perception of the sublime in natural elements such as mountains, forests, and rivers.

## 8.1 Seasonal Festivals: Udhauli, Ubhauli and Yakthung Limbu Life Cycle

The Kirat community celebrates two major seasonal festivals: Udhauli and Ubhauli. These festivals celebrate the human connection to nature, the agricultural cycle, and the balance of life. Mundhum divides the year into two parts: Ubhauli (going up) and Udhauli (going down).

Example 1: Meaning of Udhauli and Ubhauli

Literally, "udhauli" means "to descend", while "ubhauli" means "to rise". These names are related to two seasonal activities observed in nature:

- Udhauli (Mansir Purnima, November-December): Winter

begins during this time, so birds and animals migrate from cold regions to warmer lower regions. This migration is a process of "descending".

- Ubhauli (Vaisakh Purnima, April-May): During this time, summer begins, and animals and birds return from lower regions to higher regions. This is the process of "ascent".

A brief description:

*"When the bird falls, the man falls too."*
*When birds fly high, humans also soar high.*
*This is the movement of nature, the ups and downs.*
*"At this speed, people flow, and nature flows too."*
(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Kerung, 2074)

Example 2: Agricultural importance of Udhauli festival

Udhauli festival is mainly a harvest festival. On this day, Kiratis thank Mother Nature for giving them a good harvest. A Mundhumi prayer is performed as follows:

*"O Yuma Sammang, Mother Earth,*
*This grain, this fruit, this crop that you have given me*
*There was something we planted in the field.*
*But everything you give is nothing.*

*Golden rice has grown, and yellow corn is ripe.*
*It has the sweetness of gourd and the smell of fruit.*
*This is all your grace, your blessings.*
*"O Yuma, please accept this obeisance from us."*
(Rai Mundhum, quoted in Chamling, 2076)

Main activities during the Udhauli festival:

| Activity | Description | symbolic meaning |
|---|---|---|
| Chulo Puja | Worshipping in the main hearth of the house | Presence of ancestors, continuity of family |
| Nwangi | Offering new grain to ancestors | Gratitude to ancestors, request for blessings |
| Sakela dance | group circular dance | Social unity, connection with nature |
| Bhumche Puja | Worship of the village's guardian deity | Village security, protection from natural disasters |

Example 3: Agricultural importance of Ubhauli festival

The Ubhauli festival marks the beginning of the new crop planting season. On this day, Kiratis pray to Mother Nature for timely rains, good crops, and protection from natural disasters. A Mundhumi prayer:

*"O Yuma Sammang, Mother of the Earth,*
*The new year is beginning.*
*The fields are barren; the seeds are ready.*
*You send the water; you send the sun.*

*We will plow with oxen; we will sow seeds*
*But you will give the harvest; you will give the fruit.*
*So have mercy on us this year too.*
*"Oh, Yuma, hear our prayer."*

(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Tumbapo, 2077)

Example 4: The myth of Paruhang and Sumnima

There is a famous myth related to the origin of the Udhauli-Ubhauli festival – the story of Paruhang and Sumnima:

"Paruhang lived in the sky. One day he saw a beautiful girl named Sumnima walking on earth and fell in love. He made a beautiful comb and gave it to Sumnima as a gift. The two got

married.

After Sumnima had four kids, Paruhang just left. No warning, nothing—he just moved down by the Dudhkoshi River and disappeared. Days turned into years. Sumnima was on her own, searching for something to eat, when she spotted a lotus. She tasted it, and right away, something changed. Energy rushed through her. For the first time in ages, she actually felt happy. That spark pushed her to make a bootee, a kind of religious charm, from the lotus. It worked like magic—suddenly, she couldn't help but speak the truth, no matter what.

Then, out of nowhere, Paruhang showed up again. Sumnima handed him the booti. The second he put it on, he just started talking—he told her everything. Turns out, he'd been meditating up on Chomolungma, Mount Everest, after some kind of wild journey across the universe. He swore he was home for good. Sumnima was so happy she broke into a dance. That's where the Sakela dance comes from.

But honestly, this myth isn't just about Sumnima and Paruhang. It's a story about the sky and the earth—about how they meet, drift apart, and come back together. It's nature's way of showing us why the seasons keep cycling around."

## 8.2 Images of blooming and falling flowers: Compassion and beauty in nature

Flowers stick with us. When they bloom, they're the purest beauty you'll see. When they fall, they tug at your heart and remind you to be gentle. Somehow, both feelings—beauty and compassion—are woven right into the way nature works.

Example 5: The beauty of a blooming flower

There's something about a flower in full bloom—it's just pure, simple joy. You see it, and for a second, everything else fades away.

*"The hyacinth blooms in the month of Vaishakh."*
*Red pea, yellow pea, white pea*

*The mountains are colourful; the forests are colourful.*
*My heart skips a beat seeing that.*

*She is blooming like that, my beloved.*
*Her cheeks are as red as a rose.*
*Her smile is as tender as a flower.*
*Her eyes are like the rays inside a flower.*

*The blooming of flowers and the blooming of love are the same thing.*
*There is beauty in both; there is intoxication in both.*
*Hey flower, you wither slowly.*
*"Oh, my dear, you will be mine."*

(Limbu Love Song, quoted in Hangkhim, 2018)

This description contains all the elements of the Shringar Rasa:

- Stimulating: The month of Vaishakh, the sight of the Gurans blooming

- Inspiration: The beauty of the beloved

- Feeling: Heartbeat, expression of love

- Adulterous feelings: intoxication, tenderness, attraction

Example 6: Compassion in the image of falling flowers

The expression of compassion in the image of falling flowers:

*"Flowers fall in the autumn months."*
*The fallen flower turns yellow and withers.*
*Scattered on the ground, blown by the wind*
*It makes me want to cry seeing that.*

*That's how she went, my love.*
*He's been gone for a long time, never to return.*
*Her memory falls like a feather.*
*My heart is filled with his memories.*

*Falling flowers and separation are the same thing.*

*There is pain in both, and emptiness in both.*
*Oh fallen flower, you will bloom again.*
*"But my dear, he will never come back."*

(Rai Lamentation, quoted by Fedap, 2019)

This description has a deep expression of compassion. The falling of flowers and the separation of a loved one are placed together, which makes the compassion even more powerful.

Example 7: Flower images according to the season

Different flowers that bloom in different seasons in Mundhum have special meanings:

| season | Flower | Juice | Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vaishakh-Jeshtha (Spring) | Gurans | Makeup | The beginning of love, the arrival of youth |
| June-July (rain) | lotus, lotus | Aesthetics + devotion | Purity, depth of love |
| Mangsir-Push (Autumn) | Velvet, centipede | Compassion | The pain of separation, memories |
| Falgun-Chait (spring) | Redcurrant | Veer + Raudra | struggle, courage |
| | | | |

(Source: Chamling, 2076)

Example 8: Flower life cycle and human life cycle

A Mundhumi sermon links the life cycle of a flower to the human life cycle:

*"Look at this flower; it's a bud—childhood."*
*Look at this flower; it's blooming – youth.*
*Look at this flower; it has withered—old age.*
*Look, this flower has fallen—death.*

*But even if this flower falls, it still has seeds.*
*From that seed a flower blooms again.*
*A person is the same—even if he dies, he has children.*
*He has a name; he has fame.*

*This is the cycle of life—ups and downs.*
*This is the law of nature—birth and death.*
*This is the message of Mundhum—don't grieve, celebrate joy.*
(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Menyangbo, 2015)

In this sermon, the life cycle of a flower is used as a metaphor for the human life cycle, and a philosophical message of life and death is conveyed through it.

8.3 Mountains, Forests, Rivers: The Kirati Experience of the Sublime

The sublime is a concept in Western aesthetics that refers to the mixed feelings (fear and awe) that arise from vast, powerful, and terrifying natural scenes. Similar expressions of the sublime are found in the descriptions of mountains, forests, and rivers in Kirat Mundhum.

Example 9: The sublime feeling of the mountains

Description of the Himalayas in Mundhum:

*"Look at the mountains—how tall, how vast!"*
*Its top is in the sky, playing with the clouds.*
*Its base is in the ground; it embraces the earth.*
*Seeing this mountain makes me afraid, but I am drawn to it.*

*There is snow on the mountains—white, cold, hard.*

*The wind in the mountains is strong, powerful, and terrifying.*
*There are secrets in the mountains—caves, crevices, depths.*
*Seeing this mountain makes my heart tremble, but I rejoice.*

*Paruhang, the god of the sky, lives in the mountains.*
*In the mountains, Yuma also lives, Mother Earth.*
*The mountains are the meeting point of heaven and earth.*
*"When you see this mountain, you feel small but also big."*
(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Kerung, 2074)

This description has all the elements of a sublime experience:

- Vastness: "How tall, how vast." - The immeasurable size of the mountain

- Fear: "The mind is afraid." "The mind 'trembles'—the horror of the mountains."

- Attraction: "But it draws you in." "But it delights you"—awe within fear

- Divinity: The abode of gods in the mountains - Religious dimension

- Dialectical feeling: "Man is small, but also 'great'—self-realisation."

Example 10: The sublime feeling of the forest

The description of the forest also conveys a sublime feeling:

*"Enter the forest; it's dark."*
*The trees are tall, covering the sky.*
*The path is lost; I don't know where to go.*
*Seeing this forest makes me afraid but also enthralled.*

*There is a tiger, a bear, and a hyena.*
*Their roar is heard—Whoa! Whoa!*
*Their footsteps are heard—croak! Croak!*
*In this forest, humans are nothing but prey.*

*But in this forest, there are flowers and fruits.*
*In this forest, there are both water and roots.*
*In this forest lives Yuma, the mother of the earth.*

*This forest gives us life.*

*Oh, forest, you are terrible but also kind.*
*Oh, forest, you are cruel, but also generous.*
*I feel fear when I see you but also love.*
*"You are our home; you are our temple."*

(Rai Mundhum, quoted in Fedap, 2019)

This description depicts the dual nature of the forest—on the one hand, terrible and cruel; on the other, kind and generous. This duality is characteristic of sublime feeling.

Example 11: The sublime feeling of a river

The description of the river also conveys a sublime feeling:

*"Look at the river—how swift, how vast."*
*Its roar can be heard from afar—ROAR!*
*Its waves are huge; they sweep people away.*
*Seeing this river makes my heart sink, but I can swim.*

*The river originates in the mountains—white and cold*
*The end of the river is the ocean—blue and deep.*
*A river flows in the middle—waterfalls, rocks, whirlpools*
*Seeing this river makes people lose themselves, but then they find themselves.*

*This river irrigates the fields, making the crops lush and green.*
*This river gives water, gives life.*
*But this same river also floods, washing away houses.*
*People also die by drowning in this river.*

*O Tarasa, O Arun, O Saptakoshi*
*There is life in you; there is also death.*
*You have love and anger too.*
*"You are our mother; you are our enemy."*

(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Tumbapo, 2077)

In this narrative, the river is depicted as the source of both life and death. This dialectic is the centre of sublime experiences.

Example 12: The sanctity of Salpa Lake and Silicho Peak

Salpa Lake and Silicho Peak, which lie along the route of

the Mundhum Trek, are sacred sites for the Kiratis.

- Salpa Pond: This pond is considered the sacred abode of Goddess Sumnima. According to the Kirati belief, bathing in this pond washes away all sins.

- Silicho Peak (4,156 meters): This peak is considered the abode of the sky god Paruhang. It is believed that worshipping the god here brings prosperity and well-being.

A brief description:

*"The peak of Silicho is the top of the sky."*
*There sits the Paruhang, watching over the whole world.*
*Go there and pray; your wish will come true.*
*"Go there and meditate; you will be liberated."*
(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Menyangbo, 2015)

Example 13: Philosophical explanation of sublime feeling

A philosophical explanation of sublime experience is also found in the Mundhum.

*"When you reach the top of a mountain, what do you see?"*
*Below is the earth – small, fragile, insignificant.*
*Above is the sky – vast, boundless, eternal.*
*In the middle is you – a dot, a speck of dust.*

*But this dust has seen the mountains.*
*This dust has measured the sky.*
*This dust has felt it all.*
*This dust are the eyes of the universe.*

*Oh man, you are small, but also great.*
*O man, you are weak but also powerful.*
*This is the message of the sublime – you are nothing, but everything."*
(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Subba, 2075, p. 89)

In this philosophical interpretation, sublime realisation is linked to the dialectics of human existence – man is at once insignificant and immense, weak and powerful.

## Conclusion

In Kirat Mundhum, everything's connected—nature, the seasons, even how people feel. Festivals like Udhauli and Ubhauli don't just mark the time of year; they tie together the rhythm of nature and the journey of life. Then there's the story of Paruhang and Sumnima, which isn't just a myth. It's like a mirror for the way seasons come and go, with heaven and earth pulling apart and coming back together.

Flowers tell their own story here. When they bloom and fall, it's not just about beauty. It's about kindness, too—a reminder that life moves in cycles. A flower's short life stands in for our own, hinting at deeper ideas about living and dying.

The Kirati don't just see mountains, forests, and rivers as scenery. These places feel alive—huge and wild, sometimes gentle, sometimes fierce. They make you stop and just take it all in. That mix of awe and fear – it's what makes the experience feel magical. Places like Salpa Pokhari and Silicho Peak aren't just beautiful; for the Kirati, they're sacred. That's where nature and the spiritual meet, turning wonder into something almost holy.

Thus, nature and the seasons have deeply influenced the emotional world of the Kiratis. Mundhum has expressed this relationship in a very poetic, philosophical and interesting way

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# Chapter 9: Sound and Silence: The Aesthetics of Music

## Introduction: The Vibration of Sound and the Footprint of Existence

When we talk of Mundhum, many may think that it is just a collection of old mantras. But in my study and experience, Mundhum is a transcendental phonology. In Mundhumi aesthetics, 'sound' declares existence, and 'silence' gives it depth. When a samba begins to play the mundhum, there are not only words; there is an echo of the primordial vibrations of the universe. It is a form of music where there is a wonderful juxtaposition of rhythm, rhyme and silence (Subba, 2026).

## 1. Primitive Sound of Creation: 'Sam' within the Void

According to Mundhumi philosophy, there was a vast 'emptiness' before this world began. But that emptiness was not like today's 'silence'. As described in the Mundhum, there was a subtle resonance of 'Saam' (Energy/Spirit).

For example, when reciting the story of the creation of the Mundhum (Porokmi Yambami Mundhum), the sambas make the voice very deep and slow. This faint note represents a time when the earth was not formed. This phonetic beauty makes the listener

feel that music is not man-made but is an integral part of nature and creation (Chemjong, 1967).

## 2. Imitation of Nature in Instrumental Playing: The Story of 'Kay' and 'Binayo'

The beauty of Mundhumi music lies in its mimetic nature. Our ancestors tried to adapt the sounds of nature into music.

Chyabrung (K): The lake of Chyabrung is not just a slope. When the chyabrung is played, one side gives the sound of a landslide falling from a mountain and the other a faint sound of a bird's feathers. When the rhythm of 'Ke' is played in the Sakela or Paddy dance (Yalang), it stirs not only the human body but also his 'Sam' (soul) (Subba, 2025).

Binayo and Murchunga: but I still recall in the villages of Limbuwan how when a young woman played Binayo in the evening, it blended with the wind so that it was hard to tell whether it was Binayo or the wind. This abstract music makes individuals have a feeling that they belong to nature.

## 3. Samlo and Mundhumi Singing: The Aesthetics of Repetition

The recitation or singing of the Mundhum is called 'Samlo'. The words used in it are ancient and esoteric. Its beauty lies in its 'repetition'.

For example, a Phedang man says, "Ha... Huh... Ha... Huh..." When doing or repeating the same line over and over again, a 'hypnotic' atmosphere is created. According to Kainla (2012), this repetition takes the human brain from a normal state to an altered state of consciousness. It is the power of music that breaks down the walls between the physical body and the spiritual realm.

## 4. The Philosophy of Silence: The Space Between Words

In the Mundhumi aesthetic, 'silence' is not just the lack of sound; it is the completeness of the sound. Many people may think that silence means having nothing, but silence in Mundhum means being 'everything'.

One of my experiences: one day when I went to the Tongsing ritual, Samba suddenly stopped after a long time of blowing the mundhum. The quietness was so considerable as to hear the breathing of the people who surrounded it. And at this very moment Samba told them, Now we have to be silent; the ancestors are talking. ' It was in that dignified silence that the real music was hidden.

Silence in Mundhumi music can be seen from the following perspective:

i. Waiting silence: Where a gap is placed before a new voice appears.

ii. Silence of respect: Silence as a gesture of respect for ancestors and nature.

iii. The beauty of nothingness: Just as colour is valued only on a white canvas, the beauty of sound is reflected in the background of silence.

## 5. Silli and Body Music

Mundhumi music is not just something that can be heard by the ears, it is also something that the body dances to. In various 'sillies', birds, animals or agricultural work are put to the rhythm of music.

Example: When a dancer dances the silly dance to the 'mungna' (stork bird), there is a sensory balance between the speed of the playing instrument and the movement of the dancer's feet. If the rhythm of the instrument and the rhythm of the feet meet, then only 'beauty' arises there. Otherwise, it's just noise.

## 6. Modernity and Challenges in Mundhumi Music

In today's time, 'Halla' has started to get mixed with the original rhythms of Mundhumian music. I feel that the use of modern drums or guitars is obscuring that primitive 'organic' flavour of the mundhum. Preserving the Mundhumi aesthetic is not just about preserving the old instruments but also keeping alive the silence and vision of sound they offer (Subba, 2026).

The aesthetics of the 'sound and silence' of the Mundhum teach us a larger philosophy of life. The power of sound connects us to this world, and the power of silence connects us to our own soul. Mundhumi music is an inseparable confluence of nature, culture, and spirituality. To understand its beauty, it is necessary to hear it not only with the ear but also with the 'sam' of the heart.

Thus, the aesthetics of Mundhumi music are a cultural epic amidst the exhilaration of sound and the depths of silence.

## 7. Sound, Silence and Memory: The Aesthetic Dimension of MIPMA

a. 'Mip-ma': The Philosophical Plane of Memory

In Kirat Mundhumi aesthetics, there is an invisible but very powerful element at work between 'sound' and 'silence', which we call 'Mip-ma'. The word 'Mipma' in Limbu (Yakthung Pan) does not only mean 'normal memory', but it is also a deep cognitive and spiritual process. Although there is a great phonetic similarity between the 'mit' (friend) and the Kirati 'mipma' (remember) in the Nepali language, in the context of Mundhumi, 'mip' acts as a 'conceptual' bridge, connecting the listener of the present with the ancestors of the past and the traditions of the future.

When a samba recites the Mundhum, he is not merely uttering the words, but he is reliving the events and characters of the primitive times on the stage of the present through the process of 'mipma'. According to Kerung (2074), the word 'meitum' (we remembered) used in the mundhum reveals a transcendental truth, where sound opens the door to memory and silence absorbs

it.

b. Vibration of sound and regeneration of memory

In Mundhumi music, the main function of sound is 'mipma', which means to reminisce. The frequencies that arise in the mind of any Kirati while listening to the sound of Chayabrung (K) are not just the sound of a musical instrument. That voice forces him to 'mipma' the thousands of years old myths buried in his collective unconscious.

One of my experiences: I remember one time while hiking a mountain while researching, I heard the melodious melody of the binayo from somewhere far away. As soon as I heard the tune, my steps stopped. That sound made me feel like a deep 'mipma' of my childhood and the stories my ancestors had told me. There was a supernatural beauty that separated me from the material world and brought me to Mundhumi consciousness. This is the real beauty of sound—it moves people from 'I' to 'we' (ancestors) (Subba, 2026).

c. Silence and 'Ningwa-Mip-Ma' (Mindful Contemplation)

In Mundhumi aesthetics, silence is not emptiness; it is a golden opportunity to do 'mipma'. When the music stops and there is silence, the 'ningwa-mit-ma' (the act of contemplating the mind) begins. In Kirati philosophy, the mind is called 'Ningwa' and the deep contemplation of the mind is called 'Ningwa-mit-ma'.

It is in the moment of silence that a Kirati 'mipma' defines the relationship between himself and his nature. The silence between the two notes of music is where the real aesthetic experience arises. As noted by Chamling (2076), it is the silence between the words in the folk songs of the Oraon or Kirat that transports the listener to a deep emotional depth, where he can remember the root of his existence (mit).

d. The Aesthetics and Cognitive Psychology of Music

As an expert in health psychology, I have realised that the process of 'MIPMA' also has a positive effect on a person's mental health. The rhythm of Mundhumi music and the warmth

of memory it imparts protect a person from loneliness. When we say 'Meetum' (remember) to our ancestors and their knowledge, we become part of a larger cultural tree.

In this process, the dynamics of sound activate the 'limbic system' of our brain, and silence gives it time to 'process'. Thus, the aesthetics of Mundhumi music are not limited to listening but are also a therapeutic process, with the word 'MIPMA' at its centre (Subba, 2025).

## The extinction of 'MIPMA' and the challenge of modern art

Ironically, today's noisy modernity is weakening our ability to 'mip'. In today's music, there is a lot of noise, but there is less room for silence and 'mipma'. When we forget our original 'mipma', the Mundhumi aesthetic is reduced to just a formal performance. According to Phedap's (2019) interpretation of the Mundhumi collection, if we remove the 'mipma' (memory and contemplation) part from the mundhum, it remains just a pile of inanimate words.

Therefore, modern Kirat art and music need to restore the dignity of silence and the power of 'mipma' rather than the competition of sound in order to preserve its originality.

## Conclusion

The word 'Mipma' is a link in Kirati aesthetics that weaves sound and silence into one garland. It elevates the art from a mere 'visual' or 'audio' object to a spiritual experience. The success of Mundhumi music lies in the fact that it inspires the listener to go to the depths of his 'spirit' and 'ningwa' and 'mipma' to ancestors and nature.

As long as we keep saying 'Mitum' (we remember), Kirat aesthetics will remain alive. It is this great confluence of sound, silence and memory that has made Kirati life meaningful and beautiful.

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# Section D: Contemporary and Comparative

## Chapter 10: Kirat Aesthetics and Modern Art

### 1. Introduction: Historical Continuity and the Construction of Modernity

Kirat aesthetics are not the relic of a dead civilisation but rather an ontological movement that embraces the cyclical rather than the linear movement of time. When modern art, tired of the 'realism' of the European Renaissance and searching for an alternative, found new energy in the ecocentric and metaphysical aesthetic sense found in indigenous philosophies like the Kirat's.

The core mantra of Mundhumi aesthetics is the balance between 'Sam' (energy/spirit) and 'Maang' (divine). Understanding this in the context of modern art, we must perceive art not only as visual or auditory material but also as a transcendental knowledge system. The 'sound', 'silence' and 'visual symbols' taught by Mundhumi have proved to be powerful tools of deconstruction for today's postmodern art world (Subba, 2026).

### 2. Geometrical abstraction and the philosophical basis of 'Silam Sakma'

Important genres of modern art are 'minimalism' and

'geometric abstraction'. The abstraction that 20th-century painters Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich explored has existed in Kirat culture since ancient times in the form of 'Silam Sakma'.

In-depth explanation and examples:

Let's look at the structure of the Silam Sakma—it consists of nine holes cut into bamboo canes at specific angles. From the perspective of modern art, it is a 'structuralist' artwork. But its beauty lies not only in its shape. Its nine holes represent the nine dimensions of human existence and the dialectical power that blocks the path to death.

When a modern artist puts this 'pattern' of Silam Sakma on canvas, he is not just playing with colour and line. He is symbolising that fine line between life and death. According to Kayla (2012), Mundhumi symbols have such a harmony of 'emptiness' and 'fullness', which is in harmony with the 'pure abstraction' of modern art. We can call this the symbolic capital of Kirat aesthetics.

## 3. Silly: A primitive form of body language and performance art

In modern art, 'performance art' is considered to be the union of the artist's body and time. Kirati 'Sili' is the most vivid and historical example of this.

Example and analysis:

The more than 150 Sili danced in Sakela or Chasok Tangnam to imitate nature (mimesis). For example, in 'Chasuwa sili', activities from sowing seeds to harvesting are dramatised. In the modern 'avant-garde' dance genre, the body is seen as an archive. The sili are also physical records of Kirati history and philosophy of life.

When a Sili artist performs the act of a bird flying or a tree swaying in the wind, the distance between the artist and nature is erased. This is many times more powerful than the 'immersive experience' of modern art. According to Subba (2025), every physical 'movement' used in Sili is expressing a worldly story. In

this way, Sili teaches modern art to combine kinetic energy and spiritual consciousness.

## 4. Three Stoves (Sumhalung): Architecture and Spatial Aesthetics

In modern architecture, 'sense of place' and 'organic design' are given importance today. The Kirati concept of 'Three Hearths' or 'Sumhalong' presents a unique example of spatial aesthetics.

Explanation:

The three stones at the centre of a Kirati home are not just a means of cooking. They establish a triangular relationship between 'primal power', 'ancestors', and 'present man'. In the language of modern 'interior design', this can be called 'minimalist balance'.

I remember that in the old houses of Limbuwan, the location of the hearth and the empty space around it provided a special kind of psycho-cultural peace. In today's modern buildings, when we incorporate this philosophy of 'three hearths' into the design of a modern 'fireplace' or 'living area', it not only makes the house beautiful but also provides stability to the 'face' of the people living in that house. This is the interdisciplinary contribution of Kirat aesthetics to modern architecture.

## 5. Mundhumi Sound and Modern Soundscape

The sound used in Mundhumi singing, or 'samlo', and the 'silence' that follows have their own grammar. Just as modern 'ambient music' and 'sound art' create an environment through sound, Mundhumian sambas have been practising this art for ages.

Example:

The rhythm of Chhabrung (K) has a distinctive asymmetrical rhythm. The sound of one drum represents the 'seriousness' of the earth, while the other represents the 'fluidity' of the sky. In modern 'digital music', the listener is put into a kind of trance state by using such 'polyrhythms'. In today's stressful, contemporary world, the "monotonous" sound produced by playing the Mundhum recitation

can be considered a "therapeutic" art form since it engages and calms the human mind.

## 6. Digital Mundhum: New Art for the 21st Century

Kirat aesthetics are being deconstructed on today's digital canvas. Mundhumi characters and images are being reimagined in modern colours and styles through 'graphic design', 'NFT', and 'digital illustration'.

Explanation:

The inscriptions carved in the old tombs (Manguen-Genna) of Limbuwan are being transformed into ‘minimalist logos’ by today’s young designers. In this process, the old 'sacred' art is transformed into 'secular' art. This not only democratises art but also brings Kirat beauty to the global market. But here a thought-provoking question arises—does the real ‘Sam’ of Mundhum survive this transformation into a digital medium? (Subba, 2026).

## 7. Comparative Analysis: Kirat Aesthetics and Post-modernism

Postmodernism rejects the 'grand narrative' and emphasises locality. Kirat aesthetics are inherently local and particularist.

| Speciality | Kirat aesthetics | Modern art (postmodern) |
|---|---|---|
| Perception of time | Cyclical | Linear/Fragmented |
| Channel | Nature (bamboo, stone, clay) | Artificial (canvas, digital, concrete) |
| Objective | Spiritual Balance (Sam) | Personal expression or market |
| Relationship with nature | Integral part (Ecological) | Sometimes separation, sometimes anxiety |

This table shows that Kirat aesthetics emerge as a counter-narrative to modern art. Where modern art sometimes appears 'mechanical' and cold, Kirat aesthetics adds 'warmth' and 'human sensibility'.

## 8. Challenges: Cultural appropriation or enrichment?

A serious problem also arises when modern art assimilates indigenous beauty—'cultural appropriation'. 'When the modern market uses indigenous symbols merely for decoration without understanding their philosophical depth, then their original beauty is devalued.

Example: Wearing a T-shirt with a Silam Sakma motif may be fashionable, but forgetting the philosophy of life and death behind it is the commercialisation of art. Artists should respect its 'sacredness' and 'philosophical background' when using Kirat aesthetics. Art should not be just a visual commodity; it should also communicate a sense of worldliness.

## 9. Conclusion: Aesthetics of the Future

This fusion of Kirat aesthetics and modern art has created a new synthesis. This fusion has proved that indigenous knowledge systems are not against modernity, but rather, they are a philosophical medicine that corrects the weaknesses of modernity.

In the future art world, Kirat aesthetics will emerge not just as an 'ethnic identity' but as a global epistemology. The sound of the universe, the silence, and the rhythm of nature will be the soul of tomorrow's art. We need to do more research-based and creative work to introduce this ancient yet modern beauty of ours to the world.

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# Chapter 11: Comparison with other tribal aesthetics

Kirat aesthetics are not just an isolated tradition; they are deeply connected to the aesthetic sense of other tribal communities of the Indian subcontinent. At the same time, when it is compared with the ideas of the Upanishads, the pinnacle of the Indian philosophical tradition, remarkable parallels are seen. In this chapter, we will conduct a comparative analysis of the Kirat tradition with the aesthetic sense of the Oras (Kharwars), Gonds and Nagas, as well as explore the parallel texts between the Mundhum and the Upanishads.

## 11.1 Oraon (Kharwar), Gond, Naga aesthetics

The various tribal communities living in the Indian subcontinent have their own rich aesthetics. Among these, the aesthetic sense of the Oras (Kharwar), Gonds and Nagas is particularly comparable to the Kirat tradition.

Example 1: Aesthetic perception of Oraon (Kharwar) people.

The Oraon community (or Kharwar) primarily lives in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024). They worship nature and their forefathers and enjoy group dancing as an aesthetic.

| Party | Oraon tradition | Kirat tradition |
|---|---|---|
| Major festivals | Sarhul (Spring Festival) | Ubhauli (Vaisakh Purnima) |
| Nature worship | Worship of the Sal tree | Worship of Chauri (sacred tree) |
| dance | Khadi Dance (Circular) | Sakela/Chyabrung (circular) |
| Musical instrument | Mandar, drum | Madal, Chhyabrung, Zhyamta |
| | | |

(Source: Fedap, 2019, p. 645; Chamling, 2076, p. 562)

The Oraon people also have the Sarhul festival, which is comparable to the Ubhaali festival of the Kirati people. This festival involves the adorning of young people with new green leaves and also flowers, the worshipping of the sal tree, and dancing in a circle (Jharkhand Tourism, 2023). An excerpt from a Sarhul song:

Sarah has even arrived in the courtyard of Mother Earth. The smiling planet with her sallow face. Among others, this is an Oraon folk song, quoted by Chamling (2076, p. 563)

The reference to Mother Earth in this song and the fact that she is decorated with sal leaves is precisely the Kirati tradition of worshipping Yuma Sammang and decorating her with flowers and leaves.

Example 2: Beauty in the Gond community.

The Gond tribe is one of the significant tribal groups that reside in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The Gonds themselves are a tradition of abundant painting, sculpting and storytelling (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts 2024).

The features of Gond painting:

| Speciality | Gond painting | Similarities with Kirat tradition |
|---|---|---|
| Nature-centred | Trees, animals, rivers, mountains | Nature worship, sacred forest (thread/bayung) |
| geometric shape | Use of point, lines, and circles | Circular dance, circular sign |
| Ancestor depiction | Ancestor figure, mask | Figure in the tomb |
| Color usage | Natural colors (clay, flowers, leaves) | Natural colors (flowers, soil, plants) |

A painting by Gond painter Jangad Singh Shyam shows the 'Tree of Creation', which depicts a large tree with various animal and human figures on its branches (Shyam, 2010, cited in Hangkhim, 2018, p. 84). This is very similar to the Kirat Mundhum concept of 'Tongsam Tongshim' (creation and balance), where all beings are believed to have originated from a single source (Hangkhim, 2018, p. 85).

Example 3: The Naga community's sense of beauty

The Naga tribe is a collective name for various groups living in northeastern India. The aesthetics of the Nagas are expressed in martial arts, masks, tattoos (body markings), and community dance (Government of Nagaland, 2023).

Comparison of Naga and Kirat traditions:

| Party | Naga Tradition | Kirat tradition |
|---|---|---|
| Major festival | Hornbill Festival | Sakela, Chhaybrung |
| Dress | Feathers, the jewel of the river | Peacock feathers, shells, silver jewelry |
| mask | Use in religious rituals | Symbolism in the dress of a monk |
| Tattoo tradition | A symbol of courage and identity | Limitedly, cultural symbols |

(Source: Fedap, 2019, p. 652; Chamling, 2076, p. 567)

The songs of Naga warriors are dominated by heroic spirit. An excerpt from a famous Naga war song:

*"I have a shield in my hand; I have a sword in my hand*
*The blood of my ancestors is in my veins.*
*I will fight, win, or die.*
*"But I will never kneel."*

(Naga Folk Song, quoted by Subba, 2075, p. 103)

The heroic spirit expressed in this song is very similar to the heroic spirit expressed in the Kirati saga 'Khechan Ra Vichan', where Khechan fights a tiger to protect his brother (Chamling, 2076, p. 569).

Example 4: Similarities in aesthetics of three communities

The main similarities seen in the aesthetics of all three communities:

| Equality | Oraon | Gond | Naga | Kirat |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nature focus | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Ancestor worship | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| group dance | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Natural color | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Oral tradition | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| | | | | |

(Source: Kerung, 2074, p. 543; Fedap, 2019, p. 655)

These similarities demonstrate that the tribal populations of the Indian subcontinent are united by a unified aesthetic base, the centre of which is nature worship, the memory of ancestors, and the expression of the community. Dr. K. K. In this respect, Chakraborty, Member Secretary of the Indira Gandhi National Centre of the Arts (IGNCA), has remarked that the concept of beauty and utility is present in tribal creativity, and this can be adopted in the form of a cultural gauge that indicates the level of development (Indira Gandhi National Centre of the Arts, 2024).

## 11.2 Mundhum and Upanishads: A Parallel Text.

When there is a comparison between the Kirat Mundhum and the Indian Upanishads, there are very sharp similarities. Though these two traditions have a geographical and historical distance, they have a deep similarity in the philosophical ideas behind them.

Example 5: Comparison of creation myths.

The myth of creation of the Upanishads is strikingly similar to the myth of creation of the Mundhumas. According to the Aitareya Upanishad:

At the very start, this world was merely the soul (Brahman). There was nothing else. He thought, 'I will create.' 'He created."

According to Swami (2014), the teachings of Vedanta were taught to the sages by Vedanta. Swami (2014) argues that God Vedanta instructed the sages in the teaching of Vedanta.

We shall compare this with the myth of the creation of Mundhum:

There was nothing in the beginning. There was only emptiness. Afterward, Tagera Ningwafuma made a golden egg. The egg was broken – the upper part of it was the sky, and the lower part was the earth.

Taswat (Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Kerung, 2074, p. 551)

In both myths, the pre-creation is a vacuum, and creation starts with the desire or thought.

| Party | Upanishads | Mundhum |
|---|---|---|
| pre-stage | Soul/Brahman alone | void, darkness |
| Creator | Soul | Tagera Ningwafuma |
| Creation process | Desire/Thinking | Egg cracking |
| Elements | Sky, Earth, Human | Sky, Earth, Human |
| | | |

(Source: Fedap, 2019, p. 667; Swami, 2014)

Example 6: The theory of states of consciousness.

The world of consciousness is talked about in both the Upanishads and the Mundhumas. According to the Mandukaya Upanishad, there are four states of consciousness (Krishnananda, 1996; Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, 2024):

Vaishvanara (awakened state): Insight into the outside world.

Taijasa (Dream State): Dream perception.

Prajna (Sushupti state): Deep sleep, of which nothing is felt.

Turiya (fourth state): This is the state that comes after these three, which is pure consciousness.

The states of consciousness are outlined in the Mundhum, too:

Man has three modes of existence, which are Jagram (awake), Sapanam (dream), and Suting (sleep). But above these three, there is a state which has a body, no mind, and no soul. That is the state of unity with the universe.

The tale starts by telling how a man came to understand the obstacles mighty deeds have in his life. It begins with the story of how a man realised that powerful actions present barriers in his life.

In this case, a strong analogy can be observed between the 'Turiya' of the Upanishads and the state of being one with Yuma of the Mundhum.

Example 7: The Atma-Brahman and Yuma-Tagera concepts.

The Upanishads teach the unity of Atma and Brahman to be the main message. The consciousness of self is referred to as 'Atma', whereas the consciousness of the universe is referred to as 'Brahman'. The Upanishads think that the two are not distinct – ayam atma brahman (this soul is Brahman) (Swami, 2014; Sun, 2010).

The same idea appears in Mundhum:

| Panishads | Mundhum |
|---|---|
| Brahman (Universal Consciousness) | Tagera Ningwafuma (Creator, Sky God) |
| Soul (personal appropriation or enrichment? | Mit (ancestral spirit, consciousness of a person) |
| Self-Brahman unity | Mit-Tagera Ekta (Union of the Soul) with the Divine) |

A wise saying:

*"When you die, your soul flies into the sky. Once there, it meets Tagera Ningwafuma. That meeting is salvation."*

(Rai Mundhum, quoted in Hangkhim, 2018, p. 89)

Thus, the concepts of self-Brahma unity and mit-tagera unity appear to be expressed in the same way in two different traditions.

Example 8: 'Neti Neti' and the prohibitive Brahman of Mundhum

A famous verse from the Upanishad is 'Neti Neti' (This is not; this is not). It describes Brahman as beyond the limits of words and concepts:

*"That is the Brahman, Neti Neti.*

(This Brahman is neither this nor that.)

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.3.6, cited in Swami, 2014, p. 123)

In the Mundhum, Tagera Ningwafuma is also described as prohibitive:

> *"No one knows what is in the Ningwafu. It is not the sky, not the earth, not the air, not the water. It is beyond all these. It is not visible, but it is in all that is visible. It is not audible, but it is in all that is audible."*
>
> (Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Fedap, 2019, p. 673)

Here, a deep parallel is seen between the Upanishad's 'Neti Neti' and the prohibitive description of Mundhum.

Example 9: Comparison of symbols used to remember Brahman

In both the Upanishads and the Mundhumas, various symbols are used to represent Brahma/Tagera:

| Upanishad Symbols | Meaning | Mundhum symbol | Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| Om (Pranav) | The sound form of Brahma | The sound of the chyabrung | The original sound of creation |
| Sky | ubiquity | Sky (Tagera) | Tagera Ningwafuma's residence |
| Sun | light, knowledge | Namlung (Sun) | The source of creation, a sign in the creation of things |
| Ashwattha tree | Symbol of the universe | Tongsing (World Tree) | A symbol of creation and balance |
| | | | |

(Source: Kerung, 2074, p. 559; Fedap, 2019, p. 676)

A Mundhumi proverb describes the World Tree as follows:

*"There is a tree – its roots are in the sky, and its branches are in the earth. In its leaves is all life; in its fruit is all knowledge. That tree is the universe."*

(Rai Mundhum, quoted in Chamling, 2076, p. 581)

This can be compared to the description of the Ashwattha tree in the Gita: "Urdhvamulam adhashakham ashwattham prahuravyayam". (The Ashwattha tree with its roots above and branches below is a symbol of the imperishable Brahman) (Bhagavad Gita 15.1, cited by Swami, 2014).

Example 10: Concepts of duality and non-dualism

The Advaita philosophy of the Upanishads clarifies the relationship between Dvaita (two) and Advaita (one). In the world, we see two, but in reality, there is only one.

*"For where there seems to be duality, the other sees the other. Where your whole being is yourself, who can see whom?"*

(Where duality is seen, one sees the other.) Where everything is made up of the soul, who can see anything?

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.4.14, cited in Swami, 2014, p. 130)

A similar concept of duality-non-dualism is found in the Mundhum:

| Upanishadic concept | Mundhum concept |
|---|---|
| Practical Truth (Dvaita) | Tongsam (creation, diversity) |
| Transcendental Truth (Advaita) | Tongshim (balance, unity) |
| Life-death duality | Udhauli-Ubhauli (cycle, motion) |
| Self-Brahman unity (Advait) | Mit-Tagera Unity (Unity) |

Example 11. Practical differences.

| Party | Upanishads | Mundhum |
|---|---|---|
| sect | Vedic tradition, Brahmanism | Tribal tradition, Kirat |
| Language | Sanskrit | Lemon, mustard etc. |
| Access | Limited to initiated Brahmins | Open to all members of the community |
| Study | Path of Knowledge, Yoga | Rituals, dances, songs |
| God concept | formless Brahman | Personified deities (Yuma, Tagera) |
| | | |

(Source: Subba, 2075, p. 110; Kerung, 2074, p. 563)

Dr. Narendra Subba says in this regard:

> *"The Upanishads and the Mundhum are two profound philosophical traditions that developed in two different geographies and societies. But the parallels between them are striking. What they show is that the human mind in search of truth follows the same path, be it at the foot of the mountains or in the plains of the Ganges."*
>
> (Subba, 2075, p. 111)

## Conclusion

The Kirat tradition is perfectly comparable to a larger narrative when you observe other tribal aesthetics. It has much in common with the Oraons (Kharwars), Gonds, and Nagas – with their awe of nature, their worship of their ancestors, their group dancing, and their use of natural colours. You begin to understand that all these tribal communities of the Indian subcontinent developed their vision of beauty on the same platform: reverence towards nature and partying together.

It is at this point that it becomes very interesting. Even when you set the Mundhum side by side with the Upanishads,

the resemblances leap even higher. The manner in which they were created; the way they discuss the subject of consciousness, unity and duality, the self, and what ultimately is real—there is an echo of the two. It's actually kind of amazing. Everybody in the world appears to grapple with the same major queries, and at times, they even produce answers that are close to being identical.

Consider the Mandukya Upanishad – it disintegrates four states of consciousness (Krishnananda, 1996; Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, 2024). Something similar is done by Mundhum. Such a 'neti neti' style in the Upanishads, to renounce everything to arrive at the truth? Mundhum has his version of it as well. Even in duality, both traditions greatly emphasise seeing non-duality (Advaita).

All these relations actually alter our perception of the Mundhum. It is not only a tribal peculiarity of some kind – it is a part of a much larger, universal philosophical dialogue. The richness and generality of Kirat aesthetics are made rather easy to notice.

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# Chapter 12: Conclusion: Mundhum's Rasa-Drishti and the World-Stage

Kirat Mundhum is not merely a religious book; it is a deep philosophical perception of life, nature and the universe. We have examined the Mundhum in this work in different aspects: its worldview and philosophy, linguistic and rhythmic structure, aesthetics of dance and music, the rasa-vidhan in myth and saga, symbolism of ritual and colour and its comparative study. This is our final chapter, where we will speak about the future of Kirat aesthetics, what it will be able to bring to the worldview, and the directions of new research.

## 12.1 The Kirat aesthetics of the future.

Kirati aesthetics nowadays are on the edges of different challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, it is being influenced by globalisation, modernisation and migration into a new form, and conversely, there is an attempt to retain this and bring it back to life.

Example 1: The challenge of intergenerational transmission

The transmission is the greatest difficulty Kirati aesthetics would face. Given that Mundhum is founded on oral tradition, the population of priests (Phedangma, Nachhung, and Madba) who commit it to memory is decreasing (Fedap, 2019, p. 689). As one of the studies indicates, the Limbu-speaking population has declined by 18 per cent during the past three decades, and this makes it doubtful about the future of Mundhum (Subba, 2075, p.

113).

The growing urbanisation of the younger generation and its attraction to Western education have also weakened the traditional sense of beauty. As one young Kirati said:

> *"We used to dance the Sakela when we were young, but we didn't know what it meant. Now that I'm living abroad, I understand its importance. But where will my children learn this dance?"*
>
> (Immigrant Kirat, quoted in Hangkhim, 2018, p. 95)

Example 2: Attempt at revival

Though it is not easy, there are numerous attempts at restoring Kirat aesthetics. Organisations like Kirat Dharma and Sahitya Utthan Sangh, Kirat Yakthung Chumlung and others are actively involved in the preservation and promotion of Mundhum (Kerung, 2074, p. 567).

Some examples of these efforts:

| Effort | Description | Effect |
|---|---|---|
| Mundhum scripted | An attempt to write the oral Mundhum in Devanagari and Roman scripts | Conservation for future generations |
| Included in the curriculum | Department of Kirat Studies at Tribhuvan University and other campuses | Beginning of academic studies |
| digital records | Preservation of Mundhum recitation, dance, and songs in video and audio | Global reach |
| International forum | Participation in the International Indigenous Studies Conference | Global identity |
| | | |

(Source: Fedap, 2019, p. 692; Chamling, 2076, p. 589)

Example 3: Reconstruction in contemporary art

Kirat aesthetics are also being reinterpreted in contemporary art. In Chapter 10, we saw how mundane images are being used in contemporary poetry, painting, and cinema. This has given new life to traditional aesthetics.

Painter Shyam Limbu says:

> *"My paintings have symbols of the world – eggs, trees, and dance. But I have presented them in a modern style. This way, the mixture of old and new makes the art more vibrant."*
>
> (Limbu, 2076, quoted in Hangkhim, 2018, p. 97)

## 12.2 What can this contribute to worldview?

Kirat aesthetics is important not only as a limited ethnic tradition but also as a rich source that can contribute to worldview. It can shed light on certain aspects of a worldview.

Example 4: Nature-centered worldview

The greatest contribution of Kirat aesthetics may be its nature-centred worldview. Today, in times of climate change and environmental crisis, there is a need to redefine human relationships with nature (Subba, 2075, p. 115).

| Problem | Western perspective | Kirat's perspective |
|---|---|---|
| Nature | As a resource, consumable | As a mother, venerable |
| Human-nature relationship | duality, division | Advaita, unity |
| Solution | Technology, control | Balance, respect, coexistence |

The concept of Tongsam Tongshim (creation and balance) in Kirat philosophy conveys the message that balance must be maintained between nature and humans. This concept is consistent with the modern concept of sustainable development (Hangkhim, 2018, p. 99).

A wise saying:

*"When you cut down the forest, you cut down your lungs."*
*When you waste water, you drink your blood.*
*When you hurt the earth, you hurt yourself.*
*"This is the message of Tongsam Tongshim."*

(Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Kerung, 2074, p. 570)

Example 5: The concept of collectivity and community

While Western philosophy is centred on individualism, Kirat philosophy is centred on collectivism. The Sakela dance, where everyone dances together in a circular circle, is a beautiful example of this.

| Western philosophy | Kirat philosophy |
|---|---|
| "I think, therefore I am" (Cartesian) | "We are, therefore I am." |
| Personal freedom | collective responsibility |
| Competition | Collaboration |
| solo artist | Group dance/singing |

In today's times of loneliness and social isolation, the collective aesthetics of Kirat can show a way to connect people (Subba, 2075, p. 117).

Example 6: The dialectic of sound and silence

In Chapter 9, we saw how Kirat music highlights the dialectical relationship between sound and silence. This concept is particularly relevant to modern society, which is fraught with noise pollution and mental stress.

A Mundhumi sermon:

*"Sound takes you outside; silence takes you inside."*
*Sound connects you; silence explains.*
*Both sound and silence are necessary -*
*"Like two parts of a feather, like two wings of a bird."*
(Rai Mundhum, quoted in Fedap, 2019, p. 701)

This can inspire modern humans to strike a balance between sound and silence.

Example 7: Kirati's perception of the sublime

In Chapter 8 we discussed the sublime experience of mountains, forests, and rivers. This experience is different from the Western concept of the sublime. Here there is love and respect as well as fear and awe.

| Western-accented | Kirat Udatta |
|---|---|
| Prakritimati Vijay | Coexistence with nature |
| Human-centered | Nature-Centred |
| Fear and awe | Fear, love, respect and reverence |
| Personal experience | Community Feeling |

This can inspire modern humans to look at their relationship with nature in a new way (Hangkhim, 2018, p. 101).

## 12.3 New directions of research

The study of Kirat aesthetics is still in its early stages. There are many research possibilities in this area, which can help us understand this tradition more deeply.

Example 8: Possibility of comparative study

Comparative studies with other tribal aesthetics can help to see the Kirat tradition in a broader perspective. In Chapter 11 we have made comparisons with the Oraon, Gond and Naga communities. This type of study can be further expanded:

| Possible comparison | Fields of study |
|---|---|
| Himalayan tribals | Lepcha, Tamang, Gurung, Magar |
| North-East India | Naga (other groups), Mizo, Khasi |
| Australian Aborigines | nature-centered aesthetics |
| Pacific Ocean | The beauty of dance and togetherness |

(Source: Fedap, 2019, p. 705)

Example 9: Feminist and Dalit perspectives

We discussed the potential of feminist and Dalit perspectives in rewriting Mundhum. Further research is needed in this direction:

1. Feminist Rereading: Reinterpreting the Role of the Female Voice and the Female Goddess (Yuma Sammang) in Mundhum

2. Dalit Perspective: Study of Caste Structure and Marginalized Groups within Kirat Society

3. Colonial Influence: A study of the impact of modern state structures on Kirat aesthetics

Dr. Marinda Rai's statement:

> *"We need to see the Mundhum not just as a sacred text but also as a socio-political document. It also says a lot about power relations, gender, and social structure."*
> (Rai, 2077, quoted in Subba, 2075, p. 119)

Example 10: Use of Digital Humanities

Modern technology has opened up new possibilities in the study of the mundum. The use of digital humanities allows the study of the mundum to be more comprehensive.

| Technology | Use |
|---|---|
| Digital records | Video archive of Mundhum recitation, song, and dance |
| Linguistic database | Digital archive of dictionaries and grammars of Limbu and Rai languages |
| Virtual Reality | VR experience of Sakela, Chyabrung dance |
| GIS mapping | Geographical records of sacred sites (Chijakalpa, Dhago) |

(Source: Hongkhim, 2018, p. 103)

Example 11: Study of medicine and treatment methods

The Mundhum also describes the treatment methods for various diseases. These traditional medical systems can be scientifically studied:

- Medicinal Plants: Study of the medicinal properties of plants mentioned in the Mundhum

- Psychiatry: Psychological analysis of the treatment of addictions and mental illness

- Community therapy: therapeutic use of dance and music (Music Therapy, Dance Therapy)

(Kerung, 2074, p. 575)

Example 12: Depth of philosophical inquiry

The parallelism between the Mundhum and the Upanishads has opened up a new direction of philosophical inquiry. Some questions for further research:

1. How do the Mundhum and Upanishad relate to each other? Why is it that Mundhum has Tongsam Tongshim and Upanishad has Advaita?

2. Are both the Mundhum and the Upanishads of the same origin (Proto-Indo-European or otherwise)?

3. How does the Yuma of Mundhum connect with the Shakti of Upanishad?

4. What contribution can the explanation of states of consciousness in both traditions make to modern consciousness studies?

Dr. Narendra Subba's statement:

> *"Finding answers to these questions is not only about discovering our own past and identity but also about understanding the evolution of human consciousness. The Mundhum and the Upanishads, despite taking two different paths, seem to have reached the same peak – that peak is self-realisation."*
>
> (Subba, 2075, p. 120)

## Epilogue: Mundhum's Rasa-Drishti

Mundhum is more than a religious text; it is a holistic philosophy of life. It shows us how the harmony between creation (tongsam) and balance (tongshim) is the beauty of life. It shows how the triangular relationship between nature, ancestors and humans forms our identity. It shows how the nine elements – beauty, humour, compassion, anger, heroism, horror, horror, wonder and peace – are an integral part of our lives.

The most outstanding Kirat aesthetic quality is that of holism. It does not consider art, religion, philosophy, society, and nature as distinct groups of entities but as a whole. The Sakela circular dance is not only a dance; it is a united outburst of the community, nature worship, ancestral memory and spiritual practice.

The modern world is disjointed, competitive and fast-paced; thus, Kirat aesthetics can demonstrate the way of wholeness, balance and coexistence. It can remind us of our position as children of nature, as the descendants of our forebears, and as a part of a community.

And lastly, a proverb that carries with it the spirit of the whole Kirat philosophy:

*It is not as big as the sky; otherwise, it would be clouded over.*
*Do not be as tall as the mountains.*
*But they will be covered with snow in case they are tall.*
*Don't be too deep like a river; you will then drown.*
*Be evil as the earth – spacious, blunt, and generous.*
*Like the earth – this is the Tongsam Tongshim.*

Limbu Mundhum, quoted in Kerung, 2074, p. 578)

So, Kirat aesthetics induces the sense of the richness, the breadth and the loveliness of life. Its research and conservation is the conservation of not only the Kirat community but also the whole of humanity.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Major Mundhum Vocabulary

### A Comprehensive Lexicon of Kirat Ontology

In this section, we move beyond simple translations to explore the semantic depth of terms that define the Kirat lived experience. These words are not just labels; they are "vessels of consciousness".

**Sam** (साम): Nepali: आत्मा / जीवन-शक्ति (Atma / Jivan-Shakti)

English: Vital Spirit / Primordial Energy

Conceptual Detail: In Mundhumian philosophy, Sam is the invisible thread connecting all matter. It is not limited to humans; stones, rivers, and mountains possess Sam. When a Mundhumist speaks of "Sam-lo" (song of the spirit), they are referring to the vibrational frequency that keeps the universe in balance. It is the core of our health psychology, where a "lost spirit" (Sam-ma) leads to physical or mental ailments.

**Mundhum** (मुन्धुम): Nepali: मौखिक शास्त्र / वेद (Maukhi Shastra / Veda)

English: Oral Scripture / Primordial Wisdom

Conceptual Detail: The Mundhum is a living, breathing oral tradition. It is not a book to be read but a rhythm to be performed. It encompasses the history, laws, rituals, and myths of the Kirat people. It is the "archaic library" of Nepal that predates written history.

**Mip-ma** (मिप्-मा): Nepali: मनन / स्मृति (Manan / Smriti)

English: Mindful Recollection / Contemplative Memory

Conceptual Detail: As we discussed in the chapter on sound and silence, Mit-ma is the cognitive process of retrieving ancestral wisdom. It is the bridge between the mortal mind and mythological time. To "MIP/MIT" is to bring the past into the present moment of ritual.

Sumhalung (सुम्हालुङ): Nepali: तीन चुल्हा (Teen Chula)

English: The Sacred Triple-Hearthstones

Conceptual Detail: This is the physical and spiritual anchor of the Kirat home. The three stones represent the Ancestors (Manguen), the Living (Phanguen), and the Divine/Nature (Maang). It is the architectural manifestation of the Kirat trinity.

**Silam Sakma** (सिलम साक्मा): Nepali: मृत्यूपथ अबरोधक प्रतीक (Mrityupath Avarodhak Pratik)

English: Ritual Shield of Life-Persistence

Conceptual Detail: A geometric ritual object made of bamboo and thread. It symbolises the closing of the path of death. In modern art, its fractal-like symmetry serves as a powerful visual metaphor for the Kirat struggle to maintain identity in a changing world.

The Rhythms of Ritual and Seasonality

**Ubhauli** (उभौली): Nepali: उभौली / वैशाखे पूर्णमिा (Ubhauli / Baisakhe Purnima)

English: The Upward Ascension / Vernal Ritual Cycle

Conceptual Detail: Ubhaali takes place in the full moon in the month of Baisakh (April/May), when the spirits and nature are migrating towards the elevated areas. Ideally, it signifies the awakening of the earth. This is the planting and potentiality season in Mundhum aesthetics. It is a period when the sam (spirit) is urged to wake up, just as crops are growing upwards and birds are migrating.

**Udhauli** (उधौली): Nepali: उधौली / मंसिरे पूर्णिमा (Udhauli / Mansire

Purnima)

English: The Downward Descent / Autumnal Ritual Cycle

Conceptual Detail: This cycle starts during the month of Mangsir (November/December). It is the movement downward, as it is the nature making the winter sleep. It is the time of the thank-you and saving. Whereas Ubhaali is requesting life, Udhaali is the thanksgiving to the ancestral people to the harvest. The aesthetics in this case are focused on the completion and the retracing of the origins.

**Chasok Tangnam** (चासोक तङ्नाम): Nepali: चासोक तङ्नाम / न्वागी (Chasok Tangnam / Nwagi)

English: The Festival of First Fruits / Harvest Offering

Conceptual Detail: 'Chasok' is translated as 'offering', and 'Tangnam' is translated as 'festival'. It is a climax of the harvest period when the first grains are given to the goddess Yuma Sammang; then they are consumed by people. It is an ecological declaration of immense proportions; it helps to remind the community that we are guests of nature and not its masters.

**Sakela** (साकेला) / Sakenwa (साकेनवा): Nepali: साकेला / चण्डी नाच (Sakela / Chandi Naach)

English: The Cosmic Earth-Dance

Conceptual Detail Sakela is a prayer to the Earth Mother and is largely attributed to the Rai community. The physical expression of the Mundhum is through the dance movements (silli), which is a restatement of animal movements and agricultural cycles. It is a multi-sensory aesthetic experience wherein the beating of the heart of the human being and the vibration of the earth are synchronised by the sound of the drum (Dhol) and cymbals (Jhyamta).

**Tongsing** (तोङसिङ): Nepali: तोङसिङ अनुष्ठान (Tongsing Anusthan)

English: The Great Cosmic Re-balancing Ritual

Conceptual Detail: This is among the most complicated and aesthetic ceremonies of the Mundhum tradition. Tongsing takes

a number of days and nights to connect the living and the dead. It is a ceremonial psychological exercise of cleansing the family lineage during which the lineage of the family is recited to make sure Sam is well aligned with the ancestors.

**Phungwa Changm**a (फुङवा चाङ्मा): Nepali: शिर उठाउने / फूल जगाउने (Shir Uthaune / Phool Jagaune)

English: The Ritual of Blooming the Vitality

Conceptual Detail: A human spirit in Limbu Mundhum is likened to a flower (Phung). When the flower dies, the individual becomes sick or lacks confidence. Phungwa Changma is the ritual of the lifting of the head or reviving of the flower. This is a complex indigenous cognitive-behavioural therapy that could be essentially reduced to symbolic action as a specialist in health psychology, which restores the mental and spiritual.

# Appendix B: Selected Mundhum Text Translations

## Fragments of the Primordial Voice

These texts have been curated to showcase the aesthetic and rhythmic quality of the Mundhum. They are presented with their transliterated sounds to preserve the "sonic spirit" of the original.

## 1. The Invocation of the Primordial Hearth (Sumha-lung Mundhum)

This chant is performed when lighting the sacred fire, emphasizing the hearth as the center of the universe.

Mundhum: "Sum-ha-lung-re pang-nu ni-na-wa, Manguen-genna-re sa-it-lo. Mi-re sam-lo, pang-re ningwa."

Nepali Translation: "तीन चुल्हाको जगमा हाम्रो चेतना बास गर्छ, पितृहरूको आशिषले घर उज्यालो हुन्छ। आगोको गीत नै घरको आत्मा हो।"

English Translation: "In the foundation of the three hearthstones, our consciousness resides; by the grace of the ancestors, the home is illuminated. The song of the fire is the very spirit of the household."

## 2. The Prayer for Ecological Balance (Chasok Tangnam)

Usually recited during the harvest festival, this text highlights the Kirat's ecocentric beauty.

Mundhum: “Khey-ma-rey nam-wet-lo, Tok-ma-rey kha-wet-lo. Chu-lung-ma-re sa-it, sa-phek-lo.”

Nepali Translation: “धर्तीले अन्न दियो, आकाशले शीत दियो। प्रकृति र मानवको यो सङ्गम नै सिर्जनाको असली सौन्दर्य हो।”

English Translation: “The earth has yielded its grain; the sky has bestowed its dew. This confluence of nature and humanity is the true aesthetic of creation.”

3. The Ritual of Reclaiming the Path (Silam Sakma Ritual)

A protective chant that demonstrates the “Mit” (recollection) of ancestral power to shield the living.

Mundhum: “Na-yen-nu sa-phek, Si-lam-nu sak-ma. Sam-re pang-nu, ninwa-re mit-ma.”

Nepali Translation: “हामीले मृत्युको बाटो छेक्यौँ, जीवनको बाटो खोल्यौँ। आत्मालाई घर फर्कायौँ, पुर्खालाई मनमा सजायौँ।”

English Translation: “We have obstructed the path of death; we have unsealed the gateway of life. We have returned the spirit to its home and enshrined the ancestors within our mindful recollection.”

# Appendix C: Custodians of the Mundhum

Ritual, Aesthetic, and Psychological Roles of Specialists

The next set of people are the specialists, and they serve as the vessels in which the Mundhum is expressed. Every role has its own aesthetic mark, whose expression is based on the texture of the voice, physical movement, and ritual clothing.

## 1. The Samba (saambaa): The Epic Storyteller.

Aesthetic Role: Narrative and Rhythmic Cadence.

Description The Samba is lord of the Great Mundhum. They recite oral origin myths, migrations and the deep history of the cosmos, and that is their core business.

Ritual Function: They are necessary when performing life-cycle rituals such as the Tongsing. The charm of a samba is that they have a memory to sing, a memory that entails singing for hours without a script, and that is keeping a hypnotic beat that takes the listeners into the mythic time. On the psychological side, the samba gives the community historical continuity and a sense of their identity.

## 2. The Phedangma (phedaanga): The ceremony officiant and healer.

Aesthetic Role: Movements and Body Touch.

Description: The most widespread specialist is the Phedangma, acting as an intermediary between the household and the immediate spirit world (Sammang).

Ritual Function: They have daily rituals, name-giving ceremonies, and weddings. They are more grounded and domestic

in their aesthetic in comparison with the Samba. They are native curers of the community; they treat psychosomatic diseases by the ritual of Phungwa Changma (blooming the spirit flower) to restore the harmony between the individual, Sam, and nature.

## 3. The Nakchong (naakchong): The Earth-Priest (Rai Community)

Aesthetic Role: Community and Seasons of Harmony.

Description: This is exclusive to the Rai (Kirat) tradition, especially at Sakela/Sakenwa, in which the Nakchong is the intermediary between the community and the Earth Mother (Bhumi).

Ritual Function: They are the heads of the season's sinus of Ubhaoli and Udhauli. Their aesthetic contribution dwells on the general rhythm; they determine the rhythm of the dancers and see to it that the communal vitality is attuned to the cycle of agriculture. Their presence guarantees the aesthetic expression of a community to be connected with ecological survival.

## 4. Yeba and Yema (yebaa/yemaa): The Spiritual Warriors.

Ecstatic Movement and Performative Intensity: Aesthetic Role.

Description: It is the shamanic specialists that have a particular focus on the lost spirits or accidental deaths (Sogha/ Laso).

Ritual Use: The most visually dramatic ritual is their aesthetic, as they use fancy costumes, bells, and drumming to the extreme. They fulfil the Yelam (spirit dance), whose specifics are sharp and violent moves aimed at keeping the bad vibration away. They need to make the fear or trauma space into the space of spiritual victory with the high-intensity performance.

Comparison of Mundhum Specialists' Roles.

| Specialist | Primary Domain | Aesthetic Key | Psychological Impact |
|---|---|---|---|
| Samba | History/Myth | Vocal Rhythm | Cultural Identity |
| Phedangma | Health/Healing | Ritual Gesture | Mental Resilience |
| Nakchong | Nature/Seasons | Communal Dance | Social Cohesion |
| Yeba/Yema | Spirit Warfare | Ecstatic Motion | Trauma Resolution |

## Concluding Note on Specialists

Mundhumi Expert: The Confluence of Beauty and Healing

The Mundhumi aesthetic does not live alone in a void or empty space. It is a living art of 'mediation' in the community through the voices, movements and drums of our experts. The drums are not just a collection of mantras; they are a 'cultural performance' performed by these experts to the fullest.

## 1. The bipolar beauty of tone and rhythm

Two different forms of Mundhumi experts present two contrasting but complementary aspects of beauty:

Melodious hymn of Samba: It depicts the 'gentle' and 'serious' aspects of Mundhumi beauty. Samba has a melody and

rhythm that takes the listener to the depths of contemplation. This is the 'stable and philosophical' expression of the Mundhum.

Yeba's Roaring Drums: In contrast, the presentation of Yeba or Yema has a 'fierce' and 'powerful' beauty. The pounding sound of the drum and aggressive physical movements displace the negative energy of the environment and promote heroism and courage. This is the 'dynamic and rebellious' expression of the Mundhum.

## 2. Multi-sensory experience

These experts don't limit mundhum to just 'listening'. The colours of their attire, the touch of chindo and dhol, and the smell of fragrant incense make Mundhum a 'multi-sensory' experience. In this way, the mundhum activates all the senses of a person at once, making the aesthetic experience more effective and sustainable (Subba, 2026).

## 3. Psychological treatment and cultural continuity

As an expert in health psychology, I have realised that the rituals performed by these experts work to heal the 'mind' (Ningwa) of a person. When a person hears those melodious hymns or thunderous drums, he gets to exchange his pain or trauma with the shared heroism and history of his ancestors. This is a kind of 'collective catharsis'.

Ultimately, these experts are the 'living archives' of the Mundhum. Without their presence, the Mundhum could have been just a dead page in history. However, it is because of their presentation that our culture is being passed down, and the Mundhumi aesthetic is reawakening itself at every turn of time (Subba, 2025).

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# Appendix: D: The Materiality of the Mundhum

## Ritual Paraphernalia, Visual Semiotics.

The Mundhum is not only something that you hear in the chants, but it can be found in the physical world too, as it is incorporated into the tools and objects that the Kirat people use. All these bring the philosophy of the Mundhum out of the clouds and place it in our daily life.

## Sayabung: The Blossoming of Identity.

Something interesting about the Sayabang. It stands tall, full of life. This is not headgear, but it is commonly adorned with flowers, feathers (peacock, Dhanesh) and other significant items. Imagine how it feels to have something on your head: it is a sign of respect and honour. Once wearing the Ther Sayabung, a person is not himself anymore but the representative of the ancestor. It is majestic, and it is an indication that they are prepared to do something bigger-- something holy.

## The Ritual Basket (Thunhe/Wabung): The Vessel of Offering.

Feel a thunche, and you can feel its texture immediately: smooth and woven bamboo or cane and perfectly balanced. Such baskets are not only filled with grains, ginger, or ritual alcohol (thee) but also with meaning. The pattern of the basket communicates the way that all the members of the community are related. And in ceremonies, even the gentle beat of that basket in motion contributes something sweet to the entire experience, almost melodious.

## Phung: The Symbolic Flora.

The Mundhumian ceremonies are full of flowers, particularly on Phungwa Changma. And that is so pretty, but it does not last long. Blooming, then fading, which is how we are. Nevertheless, the rituals do not utilise any flower; specific flowers, called 'mundhumian', such as 'wadhumpa' or 'sajiyong', are selected. Lifting a fresh flower up (Changma) is not simply a gesture, as it grounds the moment and provides comfort or courage to the person in need.

## Selling: The Sacred Bamboo Structures.

There is the Seling – temporary bamboo frames used in rituals, such as Tongsing. They are direct and plain and do not hang about. Once the ritual is done, they are dismantled or allowed to decay into the earth. That's intentional. Kirat ritual art is not made to endure; it is all movement and change. In contrast to the stone cathedrals of the West, these buildings do not allow anyone to forget that energy, Sam, cannot be imprisoned.

## Synthesis Aesthetics: Objects of Ritual.

You have recorded these specialists' words and objects, and your book has worked out a complete map of the Kirat spirit. It carries us off between the invisible throb of the sam and the physically tangible weave of a basket made of bamboo. For the Kirat, the entire world is not merely a landscape; it is a masterpiece of God, all of it intelligently planned.

## The Aesthetic Synthesis of Ritual Objects

| Object | Element | Aesthetic Value | Philosophical Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sayabung** | Headgear | Vertical/Ornate | Personal Honor & Vitality |
| **Thunche** | Basket | Woven/Textured | Community & Earth's Bounty |
| **Phung** | Flower | Colorful/Fragile | Life Cycle & Mental Health |
| **Selling** | Bamboo Structure | Linear/Temporary | Impermanence & Transition |

# About the Author

Dr. Nawa Raj Subba

## Beyond the Horizon: An Investigation into the Thought Process of Dr. Nawa Raj Subba – One of the Leading Nepali Researchers-Writers.

Nothing can be said about Dr. Nawa Raj Subba, who can be called the rare combination of scientific rigour and indigenous soul. As a well-known Nepali researcher and writer, he has had a career spanning more than five decades of literary production and 35 years of active work in the Nepal Ministry of Health. By holding a PhD in Health Psychology and a master's in both Public Health and Nepali Literature, Dr. Subba can give us a dual viewpoint: to interpret the contemporary human condition as a clinician and, as a philosopher, to reclaim the ancient wisdom of the Himalayas.

His work, which is based in the cultural centre of Biratnagar, serves as an essential contact point between the demands of the 21st-century analytical world and the primordial oral tradition of the Mundhum. Be it the diagnosis of the invisible burdens of

the health of the people or the production of a soulful patriotic anthem, the production of Dr. Subba is rooted in the fact that the health of a nation cannot be separated from its cultural identity.

## The Visionary Multi-Faceted Portfolio.

The work of Dr. Subba represents a tribute to the so-called integrated self, grouping the decades of thought into four similar pillars and at the same time different:

## Culture, Anthropology and Mundhum Research (10+ Works)

This is the centrepiece of his reclaiming project. Dr. Subba unravels the symbolic language of native myths to give a rich anthropological commentary on the life of the Kirats.

Kirat Limbu Culture, 2023: An in-depth anthropological study of the Samba Phyang ethnic group.

Mundhum Aesthetics (2026): An innovation in beauty in terms of nature, ancestors and the sacred hearth.

Shiva Beyond Borders: A bold investigation into the Proto-Shaivism of the pre-Vedic indigenous origins.

## Literature: Poetry, Essays, Philosophical Prose (15+ Works)

His books and other literary pieces deal with the finesse of the Canvas of the Mind, which is the subtle and sophisticated nature of human thought, the precision of a psychologist, and the delicateness of a poet.

Yatra Adha Satabdiko (Journey of Half a Century): A hindsight of 50 years of national and personal transformation.

Bich Batoma Byujhera (Self-reflection at the Moment):

The poem has a significant symbolic meaning and deals with the subject of identity and human feeling.

Dialogue between the Sky and the Self (2025): a work of metaphysical prose that looks at the link between consciousness and the infinite.

## Public Health and Behavioural Science (9+ Works)

Dr. Subba targets psychological determinants of wellness and social health through his experience of 35 years of working in the health sector.

Anxiety: The Unspoken Health Burden: A critical analysis of the mental health crisis in contemporary Nepali society.

Towards Immune Health (2024): A lifestyle- and wisdom-grounded holistic approach to wellness.

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He is a renowned lyricist who adds a philosophical touch to the patriotic and modern songs that touch the Nepali soul.

Deshko Maya & Hami Pahile Nepali: The odes of national unity and patriotic pride.

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Pratibimba Series: A pictorial and sound record of his cultural and musical voyage.

## Why His Work Matters Today

The study by Dr. Nawa Raj Subba proposes a primordial solution at a time when the world is shifting fast into globalisation and environmental crisis. His claim of Tongsim Tongshim (Creation and Balance) and the loss of lost identities encourages a new generation of scholars to seek their origins first before trying to reach the future. His life is still a living example that a Nepali researcher-writer may successfully merge the fields of tradition, science, and art.

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**Mundhum Aesthetics: The Meeting of the Old Rhythm and the Consciousness of Modernity.**

The Mundhum Aesthetics is a profound philosophical document in which the sounds of the Kirat civilisation that have disappeared are brought up to date with current thought. Mundhum is not merely a collection of chants and rituals; it is a sort of aesthetic vision, an eternal way of life that brings humanity, nature, and the universe together. Mundhum scholar and health psychologist Dr. Nawa Raj Subba builds a solid intellectual bridge between Western aesthetic inquiry, Indian Rasa theory, and native wisdom, making Mundhum consciousness an important discourse on the global stage.

This study carefully examines the group soul in the Sakela dance, the creative force of the Chyabrung drum, and the philosophical innuendo of Mip-ma (reflective memory). The essence lies in the Sublime (Udatt) and in the statistical correlation between the grandeur of the Himalayas, the musical nature of rivers, and the holiness of the three-stone fire.

The main message of the book is quite clear: instead of seeking the solitary and darkened heights of ego, true beauty is to become like the earth—enormous, strong, and unselfish. For the contemporary person who is living in environmental disasters, psychological pressures, and the need to find themselves, the book is a "philosophical guidebook" and a "primordial antidote" to returning to the primordial rhythms of nature.

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